

Education in Britain.

Each country in the United Kingdom has a separate education system. The secretary of State for Education and Skills is responsible to the UK Parliament for education in England, though the day to day administration and funding of state schools is the responsibility of Local Education Authorities. Universal state education in England and Wales was introduced for primary level in 1870 and secondary level in 1900. Education is mandatory from ages five to sixteen.

In Scotland, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning is responsible to the Scottish Parliament for Education, with day to day administration and funding of state schools being the responsibility of Local Authorities. Scotland legislated for universal provision of education in 1696. The assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland have responsibilities for education in Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.

The majority of children are educated in state-sector schools, only a small proportion of which select on the grounds of academic ability. Despite a fall in actual numbers, the proportion of children in England attending private schools has risen to over 7 %: the figure in Scotland is just over 4 % though it too has been rising slowly in recent years. Just over half of students at the leading universities of Cambridge and Oxford had attended state schools. State schools which are allowed to select pupils according to intelligence and academic ability can achieve comparable results to the most selective public schools: out of the top ten performing schools in terms of GCSE results in 2006 two were state-run grammar schools.

Some of the UK's 138 university level institutions are internationally renowned, especially those of Cambridge, Oxford and London.

Higher Education in the UK

Great Britain has a long history and ancient traditions of training of foreigners in the higher educational institutions. The British education gives qualification of the international level and has the highest quality on the broad audience of subjects. All educational institutions of Great Britain have accreditation of the British Council or other authorized organizations. The level of teaching is very high, and more than 90% of students successfully finish universities and institutes.

Higher education in Britain is traditionally associated with universities, though education of university standard is also given in other institutions such as colleges and institutes of higher education, which have the power to award their own degrees.

The term "higher education" in Great Britain concerns programs, whose purpose is award of a degree: the bachelor, the master or the doctor. It is

possible to receive degrees the bachelor in high schools and to continue it in postgraduate study. It is possible to receive master in high schools, some higher education colleges or comprehensive establishments.

In the entire UK there are about 115 universities and another 140 colleges of such specialties as fine arts, music and drama, technology or education. A typical British university enrolls from 6000 to 12000 students. The exception is Britain's Open University, a non-residential institution, which serves more than 20000 students.

The students who go on to college are very well-prepared to do so. During the last two years of high school they specialize in college preparatory courses and then they take special national examinations (A-level exams) or Scottish leaving examinations in Scotland in order to qualify to compete for acceptance to a university program.

Good A-level results in at least two subjects are necessary to get a place at a university. However, good exam passes alone are not enough. Universities choose their students after interviews. For all British citizens a place at a university brings with it a grant from their local education authority.

The minimal age of entrants usually makes 18 years. The majority of the future students enter the university just after school, but the number of more adult students who act after the ending of college of professional or further training has increased recently.

The university is like a federation of colleges. It arranges courses, lectures, exams and awards the degrees. University teaching combines lectures, practical classes and small group teaching in either seminars or tutorials.

English universities greatly differ from each other. They differ in date of foundation, size, history, tradition, general organization, methods of instruction, and way of students' life.

University degree courses generally last 3 or 4 years though in medicine 5 or 6 years are required. The first degree of Bachelor is awarded on the completion of such a course depending on satisfactory examination results. Further study of research is required at modern universities for the degree of Master and by all universities for that of Doctor. Universities are centers of research as well as teaching and many postgraduates are engaged in research for higher degrees, usually Doctorates.

The majority of university rates last from two till four years. Rates with a break for practice can increase this term by one year, and medical and veterinary rates last five years. It is the basic rate after which students receive a degree of bachelor. In England and Wales for reception of a degree of bachelor it is required three years of study, in Scotland – four. In a case when for reception of any degree it is required not only study, but also an industrial practice (Sandwich courses), the general term will accordingly be extended.

Students who obtain their Bachelor degree can apply to take a further degree course, usually involving a mixture of exam courses and research. There are

two different types of post-graduate courses – the Master's Degree (MA or MSc), which takes 1 or 2 years, and the higher degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), which takes 2 or 3 years. Funding for post-graduate courses is very limited, and even students with first class degrees may be unable to get a grant. Consequently many post-graduates have heavy bank loans and are working to pay their way to a higher degree.

British universities are independent, autonomous, self-governing institutions. Although they all receive financial support from the state, the Department of Education and Science has no control over their regulations, curriculum, examinations, and appointment of staff or the way in which money is spent. There are about one hundred universities in Britain. The oldest and best-known universities are located in Oxford, Cambridge, London, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Southampton, Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham.

Oxford and Cambridge are the oldest and most prestigious universities in Great Britain. They are often called collectively Oxbridge. Both universities are independent. Most of their students are former public school leavers. Oxford and Cambridge universities each have over 10000 full-time students. Oxford is older than Cambridge, more philosophical, classical and theological.

Cambridge on the other hand, is more scientifically based. Oxford and Cambridge universities consist of a number of colleges. Each college is different but in a number of ways they are alike. Each college is governed by a Master. The larger ones have more than 400 members; the smallest colleges have less than 30. Each college offers teaching in a wide range of subjects. Within the college one will normally find a chapel, a dining hall, a library, rooms for undergraduates, fellows and the Master, and also rooms for teaching purposes.

Oxford University has a reputation of a privileged school. Many prominent political figures of the past and present times got their education at Oxford. Outstanding scientists work in the numerous colleges of the University teaching and doing research work in physics, chemistry, mathematics, cybernetics, literature, modern and ancient languages, art and music, psychology.

Cambridge University started during the 13th century and grew until today. Now there are more than 30 colleges. The University was only for men until 1871, when the first women's college was opened. In the 1970s most colleges opened their doors to both men and women. Almost all colleges are now mixed. Lots of great men studied at Cambridge, among them Desiderius Erasmus, the great Dutch scholar, Roger Bacon, the philosopher, Milton, the poet, Oliver Cromwell, the soldier, Newton, the scientist, and Kapitza, the famous Russian physicist.