

INCA Comparative Tables

International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive

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Introduction

INCA (www.inca.org.uk) is the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive. It provides regularly updated descriptions of government policy on education in Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA and Wales. The INCA website makes particular reference to the curriculum, assessment and initial teacher training frameworks in place, and focuses on education provided in schools and to the 3-19 age range. Production of the website is funded by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in England and managed and updated by the International Information Unit at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The INCA project was originally commissioned by the, then, School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), now the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in May 1996, as part of its work in monitoring the curriculum in England. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was asked to undertake an international review of curriculum and assessment frameworks in 16 countries.¹ The project is ongoing and data on the Republic of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and, most recently, South Africa has since been added. The sections on initial teacher training, which were funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), were added to all the country descriptions in 2004 and 2005. These sections of the website are not being reviewed and updated in 2009.

The aims of the project are to:

- Build, maintain, update and develop an accurately researched and ready-to-use resource of 'country archives', comprising descriptions of government policy on the aims, organisation and control, and structure of the education system, on the curriculum and assessment frameworks, and on the initial teacher training systems in mainstream and special education across all countries of the international review.
- Provide comparative tables, thematic probes and thematic studies in specific areas of interest.
- Provide detailed information on specific areas to enable QCDA to evaluate the English National Curriculum and assessment frameworks.
- Help QCDA analyse the outcomes of international comparisons.

¹ Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA.

These comparative tables, updated on a regular basis, aim to provide a readily comparable overview of the detailed descriptions of national education policy in the country archives. Whilst more manageable than the complete Archive, the comparative table format inevitably entails simplification of complex data, with the risk of distortion. The following therefore outlines the caveats which apply and the strategies adopted to minimise any negative effects:

- The concepts and categories are distinctively related to the curriculum and assessment framework in England and may not apply to other countries.
- The terminology used is that used in England. Explanatory notes are provided and the annotations respect, as far as possible, national terminology.
- In some cases, the Archive or the international comparisons used as sources (e.g. OECD) do not include information for all the countries in the study. Where comparable data are not available this is indicated in the tables.
- For those countries with devolved structures (Australia, Canada, Germany, South Africa, Switzerland, and the USA) it is not always possible to provide 'national' data. Readers should therefore recognise that the data may refer to specific states or provinces, as examples, and cannot necessarily be taken to reflect a national position. Such countries are identified with a dot in the left hand margin of a table.

The comparative tables list countries in 'country blocks'; UK and Ireland, Europe, and 'the rest of the world'. These groupings were chosen to allow for easy comparisons between countries, especially the home countries² and Ireland, and to ensure consistent groupings where it was considered necessary to split tables.

United Kingdom and Ireland	Mainland Europe	Rest of the world		
England	France	Netherlands	Australia	New Zealand
Ireland	Germany	Spain	Canada	Singapore
Northern Ireland	Hungary	Sweden	Japan	South Africa
Scotland	Italy	Switzerland	Korea	USA
Wales				

In addition to the table itself, each section contains explanatory notes and references to the sections of the online Archive from which the information in the table is sourced.

As in the Archive, the term 'student' is used for pupils at all stages in the education system.

The principal source of information for the tables is the online Internet Archive (www.inca.org.uk). All sources in the Archive are referenced, so that users can evaluate the content and locate sources, where needed. A full list of sources for each country is available in the online Archive.

Additional summary information for all Archive countries is included in the 'system summaries'. These concise briefings provide an overview of the education system in a particular country. To access the system summaries, from the INCA website homepage (www.inca.org.uk), select the country of your choice from the 'Select country' drop-down menu, then 'System summary' under 'Select subject/chapter heading', then 'mainstream' or 'special' and click 'Go'.

² England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland

Table 1
General characteristics

	Population (thousands) 2006	Population density (per km ²) 2006	% of population aged under 15, 1960	% of population aged under 15, 2006	% of men under 25 unemployed 2007	% of men under 25 unemployed 1997	% of women under 25 unemployed 2007	% of women under 25 unemployed 1997	% of total labour force unemployed 2006	% of total labour force unemployed 1996	% GDP on education, public and private 2005
United Kingdom	60,587	247	23.3	17.7	16.0	15.6	12.7	11.1	5.4	8.1	6.25
Ireland	4,233	60	30.5	20.4	9.3	16.9	7.9	15.2	4.4	11.9	4.58
France	61,353	112	26.4	18.4	18.0	24.5	19.6	32.8	9.1	12.2	6.01
• Germany	82,368	231	21.3	13.7	12.2	10.7	11.1	9.6	10.4	9.0	5.10
Hungary	10,071	108	25.3	15.3	17.6	16.9	18.6	14.5	7.5	10.1	5.61
Italy	58,435	194	23.4	14.2	18.2	26.7	23.3	39.6	6.9	11.7	4.71
Netherlands	16,346	401	30.0	18.2	6.5	8.8	8.1	9.8	3.9	6.5	5.02
Spain	44,068	87	27.3	14.5	15.2	30.4	21.9	46.0	8.5	22.1	4.63
Sweden	9,081	20	22.4	17.1	18.4	21.7	19.5	20.4	7.1	10.0	6.38
• Switzerland	7,484	181	23.2	15.9	6.8	7.9	7.4	3.8	3.9	3.7	(:)
• Australia	20,701	3	30.2	19.6	9.4	17.3	9.3	14.7	4.9	8.5	5.81
• Canada	32,649	3	33.7	17.3	12.3	17.1	10.0	15.2	6.3	9.6	6.2 ³
Japan	127,770	338	30.2	13.6	8.3	6.9	7.1	6.3	4.1	3.4	4.92
Korea	48,297	484	42.3	18.6	11.4	9.2	7.1	6.5	3.5	2.0	7.19
New Zealand	4,185	16	32.9	21.2	9.6	13.1	9.8	13.0	3.8	6.1	6.68
Singapore	4,589 ⁴	6,489 ⁵	39.1 ⁶	18.9 ⁷	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	3.4	(:)	(:)
• South Africa	49,321 ⁸	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	(:)	5.4 ⁹
• USA	299,398	32	31.0	20.3	11.6	11.8	9.4	10.7	4.6	5.4	7.13

(:) Not available

Sources/Further information

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) (2008). *OECD in Figures 2008*. Paris: OECD [online]. Available: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/17/41733586.pdf> [23 June, 2009]

Singapore : Data is taken from the Statistics Singapore website (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/>)

³ 2004 figure

⁴ 2007

⁵ 2007

⁶ 1970 figure

⁷ 2007

⁸ Mid-year estimate 2009 - <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022009.pdf>

⁹ 2006- http://earthtrends.wri.org/searchable_db/index.php?step=countries&cID%5B%5D=165&theme=5&variable_ID=643&action=select_years

Table 2

Levels of control and administrative organisation

	National level	Second level	Third level	Institutional level	Notes
England	Ministry	152 local authorities (LAs)		School governing bodies	Devolved responsibility to schools/school governing bodies. Legislation allows for the creation of integrated children services departments, at local (second) level, responsible for education, children and young people's health and social services.
Ireland	Ministry			Boards of management	Ministry formulates policy, monitors quality, allocates resources and is responsible for some organisational and administrative functions. Boards of management are an initiative to devolve more responsibility to schools.
Northern Ireland	Ministry	5 Education and Library Boards (ELBs)		School governing bodies	It is intended to establish a single Education and Skills Authority (ESA) which will replace the five ELBs.
Scotland	Ministry	32 local authorities		School boards	Devolved responsibility to local authorities/schools.
Wales	Ministry	22 local education authorities (LEAs)		School governing bodies	Devolved responsibility to schools/school governing bodies.

Continued

	National level	Second level	Third level	Institutional level	Notes
France	Ministry	Académies	Régions, départements or communes		Ministry defines national policies, guidelines and curricula. Devolved responsibility (via académies) to régions for upper secondary education, départements (lower secondary) and communes (pre-primary/primary).
• Germany	(National) federal government	16 Länder	Local school districts		Länder set guidelines; local school districts recruit staff, determine curricular content, choose texts etc. Standing Conference of Ministers of Education & Cultural Affairs of the 16 Länder is main instrument of cooperation at national level.
Hungary	Ministry	3000+ municipalities or counties (local authorities)		Schools	Policy determined at national level; organisational decisions at local and school level.
Italy	Ministry	20 regions	Provinces and municipalities/communes	School councils	Centralised policy making. Increasing delegation of administrative powers from central government via regions, provinces and municipalities/communes to schools.
Netherlands	Ministry	Provinces	Municipalities (local authorities)	c. 6300 competent authorities (school boards)	Devolution of financial and management responsibility to the competent authorities.
Spain	Ministry	17 Autonomous Communities	Local (municipal) authorities, e.g. Municipal School Councils	Governing/educational coordination bodies, e.g. school councils of individual schools	Ministry responsible for general regulation of system, policies and guidance. Autonomous Communities oversee implementation of nationally defined standards, adapt these to local situation, set up teaching establishments, administer personnel etc. Schools are autonomous in organisational, educational and financial affairs.
Sweden	Ministry	2 national agencies, plus county administrations	289 municipalities	School principals	Municipalities decide how schools are run, following national Ministry guidelines.
• Switzerland	Confederation	26 cantons	c. 3000 municipalities	School board/teachers	Educational goals defined by cantons. Very few national agreements, although there are national standards for the general and vocational leaving examinations (around age 18). Recent increased movement towards further harmonisation of the education system; ongoing discussions. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) is the main instrument of cooperation between cantons. Most cantons mandate municipalities to set up schools.

Continued

	National level	Second level	Third level	Institutional level	Notes
• Australia	National (commonwealth) government	6 states and 2 territories	Districts	School councils	Responsibility for education rests with the states and territories. The commonwealth (federal) Government promotes national consistency and coherence. Collaboration takes place through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).
• Canada	Confederation	10 provinces and 3 territories	Local school boards/districts		Responsibility for education rests with the provinces and territories. The Council of Ministers of Education Canada, CMEC, ensures national-level communication, but has no direct control.
Japan	Ministry	47 prefectures	3400+ municipal/local boards of education	School principals	Ministry oversees; prefectures operationally responsible for upper secondary, municipalities for compulsory education.
Korea	Ministry	7 Municipal and 9 Provincial Education Authorities (MPEAs) or Metropolitan Offices of Education (MPOEs)	Around 180 local offices of education (LOEs) (school district offices of education)	'School management committees'	Gradually increasing budgetary, administrative and curricular powers delegated to MPEAs and MPOEs.
New Zealand	Ministry			Boards of Trustees	Ministry provides policy advice, allocates resources, develops curriculum and monitors effectiveness. Boards of Trustees (elected by parents) develop school charter including aims/objectives.
Singapore	Ministry			School principal or, increasingly, superintendent in charge of 'cluster' of 13/14 schools.	School principal determines institutional programme/structure, based on national Ministry guidelines. Development of school clusters aims to confer greater authority to school superintendents.
• South Africa	National ministry	9 provinces		School governing bodies	The National Ministry has exclusive responsibility for tertiary education and shares responsibility with the provinces for all other levels of education. The nine provinces implement education policy devised nationally and make funding decisions. Significant responsibility is devolved to school governing bodies.
• USA	Federal government	50 states	Local district school boards	School	Individual states provide policy guidelines; local districts operate schools within these guidelines. Some national (federal) initiatives influence state policy guidelines.

Sources/Further information

For further information about the contents of this table, see the following sections and their subsections of the full archive:

Levels of control and administrative organisation

Organisation/control/funding ⇒ 2.1 Organisation and control of system/structure and 2.1.1 Control

Table 3

National education aims

Table 3 summarises the general aims, purposes, goals and principles of education, as stated in the documents consulted for this review. It does not reflect the emphasis placed on each area by the individual country. Individual country archives should be consulted for this purpose.

	Excellence/raising standards	Individual development	Values/ethics/morals	Emotional/spiritual development	Social development	Personal qualities	Equal opportunity/multi-culturalism	National economy	Preparation for work	Basic skills – literacy/numeracy	Scientific/technological skills	Foundation for future education	Knowledge/skills/understanding	Citizenship/community/democracy	Cultural (heritage literacy)	Creativity	Non-mother tongue language	Environment/sustainable development	Health/physical/leisure	Lifelong learning	Parental participation	Special learning needs (including gifted)
England	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ireland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
N. Ireland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Wales	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Scotland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
France	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Germany	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hungary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Italy	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Netherlands	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Spain	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sweden	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Switzerland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Australia	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Canada	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Japan	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Korea	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
New Zealand	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Singapore	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
South Africa	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
USA	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables, see the following section of the full archive:

Table 3 National Education Aims

Context and principles of education ⇨ 1.2.1 Aims, objectives, values, principles

Table 4

Recent education reforms

Table 4 provides an overview of the timing of the introduction and review of legislation and key initiatives in six key areas. Dates in blue indicate the current key legislation or initiative. Dates in a normal font imply that the major legislation has been amended without changing the major direction of the legislation/initiative. Dates included in the table only cover legislation/initiatives which are already in force. Pending legislation or initiatives awaiting implementation are covered in footnotes.

	Length of compulsory education	Promote pre-school education	Primary curriculum	Secondary curriculum	Standardised national assessment	Examinations
England	1973 2008	1998, 2006	1988 1995, 96, 97, 98 2000	1988 1995, 96, 97 2000, 02, 2006 , 08	1988 1996, 97 2002, 2004 , 2008	1988 2000 , 2008
Ireland	1937, 1998 2000	1994, 1999	1971 1999	1989 1994 1995	1989 1999 2007	1989 1995
N. Ireland	1973 1989	1998	2004 2006	2006	1989 1996, 98 2006	1989, 1998 2000, 02, 04, 05 2006 , 2008
Scotland	1947 1980	1947 1968	1989 2000 2004	1977, 1987 1999, 2000 2004	1991 2003 2004 , 2005	1980, 1992, 99 2002, 04, 05
Wales	1973	1998 2001 2008	1988 1995, 96, 97 2000, 01, 03 2008	1988 1995, 96, 97 2000, 01, 03, 04 2008	1988 1996, 97, 99 2001 2004 , 06	1988 1996, 97 2000, 01, 2007 , 2008

Continued

	Length of compulsory education	Promote pre-school education	Primary curriculum	Secondary curriculum	Standardised national assessment	Examinations
France	1936 1959	1989	1991, 95 2002, 05 , 06, 2008	1995, 99 2001, 05 , 06, 09	1985, 89	1985, 87 1999 2001, 05
• Germany	n/a	1993, 96	1994	1993, 96	2002	1971 1994, 97, 99 2005
Hungary	1993, 96		1993, 95, 99	1993, 95, 99 2000	1993, 95, 96, 99 2004	1993, 96 2002
Italy	1999 2006	1968 1991	1985 1991 2004, 07	1979 2001 , 04, 07	1977 1996, 97 2007	1979 1992, 97 2004
Netherlands	1981	1981	1993, 95, 98 2003, 06	1993, 98, 99 2003, 06	2006	1998, 99
Spain	1990	1990 2006	1990 2006	1990, 92, 93 2006	1990 2006	1990 2006
Sweden	1985	1991, 98	1965 1994, 98	1965 1994, 98 2000	1995 2000, 09	1969 1995 2000
• Switzerland	1970	n/a	n/a	n/a	1968 1994 2002	1968 1994
• Australia	n/a	n/a	1991	1991	1991, 97 2008	n/a
• Canada	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1989 2003, 07	n/a
Japan	1947 2006	1947 2006	1989 1998	1989 1998	1964 2007	1994
Korea	1949 1997	1969 1982 1999 2007	1992 1997 2007	1992 1997 2007	1987 1995, 99 2000	1974 1991, 95, 97, 98
New Zealand	1993	1989 1996 2002	1991, 93 2007	1991, 93 2007	1995, 97	2002 , 07
Singapore	2000	2000	1997 2001 , 08	1997 2001 , 02	1997 2001	2002 , 03
• South Africa	1996	2002	1998 2002	1998 2002	1998 2005	1995 2001, 08
• USA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1969 2002	n/a

Notes

- England** The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced a requirement for all young people to participate in (at least part-time) education and training until their 18th birthday. The first cohort to be affected by the changes began secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008. The minimum age at which young people can leave learning will be raised in two stages – to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015. In 2006, the weekly free entitlement of 12.5 hours of early education and childcare for 3- and 4-year-olds was extended from 33 weeks per year to 38 weeks. By 2010, all 3- and 4-year-olds will be entitled to 15 hours of free early education and childcare provision. A review of the primary curriculum is underway in 2008/09. In September 2008, a new secondary curriculum came into force and 14- to 19-year-olds began to have access to a range of new specialised diplomas. Also in that month, revised GCE A Levels began to be introduced.
- Ireland** The Education (Welfare) Act of 2000 raised the school leaving age from 15 to 16 or the completion of three full years of second level education. This was implemented in the 2002/03 school year. A White Paper on early childhood education 'Ready to Learn' was published in 1999 and a consultative document 'Towards a Framework for Early Learning' was published in 2004. The framework for early learning is being launched and disseminated in 2009. A review of the primary curriculum has recently been completed. In 2007, all children at the end of Year 1 or the beginning of Year 2 and at the end of Year 4 or the beginning of Year 5 of primary education began to take standardised tests in reading (English) and mathematics.
- Northern Ireland** Under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, revised statutory curriculum and assessment arrangements for primary and secondary education are being implemented gradually from September 2007. Revised GCE A Levels also began to be introduced from September 2008.
- Scotland** The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 empowered local authority social work departments to set up day nurseries to care for children across the whole pre-school age group and to provide pre-school education for the older child. A new curriculum for 3- to 18-year-olds was proposed in the 2004 document 'A Curriculum for Excellence'. The framework for teaching and learning for Curriculum for Excellence was formally launched in spring 2009. The Scottish Government is currently consulting on the next generation of National Qualifications.
- Wales** A new 'foundation phase' of education for three- to seven-year-olds began to be introduced in September 2008. At that time, a revised curriculum for 3- to 19-year-olds also began to be introduced. Changes to the national assessment system in Wales mean that statutory assessment at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3 (ages 7, 11 and 14 respectively) is by teacher assessment only. Following a successful pilot, the new Welsh Baccalaureate (16+) qualification has been being introduced in a staged rollout since September 2007, and revised GCE A Levels began to be introduced in September 2008.
- France** Compulsory schooling was extended to 14 in 1936 and 16 in 1959. Following extensive revisions, a new primary programme of study began to be introduced from the beginning of the 2008 school year. Similar new programmes of study were introduced to lower secondary education at the start of the 2009 school year.
- **Germany** National tests to assess performance against common standards in primary and lower secondary education are being introduced gradually. The process began in the 2004/05 school year, based on an agreement of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Culture of the 16 German Länder first signed in 2002.

Hungary	The school leaving age was raised to 16, as a result of 1993 legislation, and to 18 in 1996. As a result, those children commencing compulsory education from September 1998 had to remain in education until the age of 18.
Italy	New legislation makes provision for compulsory education to last 10 years, from age 6 to 16. It is scheduled to come into effect from the 2009/10 academic year. In 2004, the 'primo ciclo' (first cycle of education, consisting of five years of primary education and three years of lower secondary) was introduced. Schools are currently required to apply the 2007 Guidelines for the Curriculum, whilst bearing in mind some aspects of the 2004 guidelines. Reform of the upper secondary curriculum is also imminent.
Netherlands	The Primary Education Act 1981, which lowered the starting age of compulsory education from 6 to 5 years, abolished separate nursery schools and brought provision for 4- and 5-year-olds into primary education, came into effect in 1985.
Sweden	Compulsory education normally begins at age 7 and lasts nine years. However, since 1991, 6-year-olds have been able to enrol in Year 1 of compulsory education if places are available. Since 1998 it has also been possible to postpone a child's entry to Year 1 of compulsory education until the age of 8. National tests for children in Year 3 (aged 9-10) were introduced in the spring term of 2009. The Ministry of Education and Research plans to introduce new syllabuses in all subjects in compulsory education in the 2011/12 school year and is planning a new Education Act in 2011.
• Switzerland	A draft national agreement on the objectives and content of education, including the introduction of curricular standards during compulsory education, is in the process of deliberation and ratification by the cantons.
• Australia	Education is the responsibility of individual States and Territories. There is collaboration through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). In May 2008, students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 (ages 8/9, 10/11, 12/13 and 14/15 respectively) took the first (NAPLAN) national tests in literacy and numeracy. NAPLAN is the National Assessment Programme in Literacy and Numeracy. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority has been charged with developing a national curriculum to be introduced in 2011. Aligned to this will be a national assessment and reporting programme.
• Canada	Provinces and territories control education; there is some national influence through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) which is responsible for national-level communication. The CMEC-developed national School Achievement Indicators Programme (SAIP) (standardised lower secondary tests) has been replaced by the Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP). The first PCAP tests in reading, maths and science took place in spring 2007.
Japan	In 2006, the Fundamental Law of Education was revised for the first time in sixty years. Following a review in 1998, revised courses of study were introduced at primary and lower secondary level in 2002. In 2009, these are again being reviewed. New national standardised tests in Japanese and mathematics took place for all pupils in Year 6 (ages 11 to 12) and Year 9 (ages 14 to 15) in April 2007. The Education Ministry plans to fully implement new curriculum guidelines in elementary schools (6- to 12-year-olds) in the 2011 school year, in junior high schools (12- to 15-year-olds) in 2012, and in high schools (15- to 18-year-olds) in 2013.
Korea	The curriculum was revised in 2007.

- New Zealand** A new curriculum was released in November 2007 and is being implemented in schools between 2007 and 2010. The National Education Monitoring Project, for small samples of primary age children and children at the primary-secondary transition stage, began in 1995. Voluntary assessment on school entry was initiated nationally in 1997. A National Assessment Strategy (for compulsory education) was introduced in 1999. A modular/cumulative National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (15+) began to be introduced in 2002/3 although it was launched initially in 1998. National standards, which set out descriptions of what students should know and be able to do in reading, writing and mathematics at different points in their schooling from years 1 to 8 (aged 5 to 13) were introduced in 2010.
- Singapore** Following legislation passed in 2000, six years of primary education became compulsory for children starting primary school in the 2003/4 school year. A new pre-school curriculum framework, drawn up in 2000, was launched in January 2003. Following a review of upper secondary education in 2002, a revised curriculum and more flexible educational pathways began to be introduced in junior colleges (ages 16 to 18) from 2006. In 2008, the Ministry of Education conducted a review of primary education, changes arising from the review are in the process of implementation.
- **USA** The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been assessing students' knowledge nationally in reading, writing, mathematics, science and other subjects since its introduction in 1969. President Bush's 2002 national education reform strategy - 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) - signed into law statutory testing in reading, maths and science throughout the USA. In 2009/10, the Obama administration will be reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as part of the reforms being implemented under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Sources/further information

The tables above indicate recent major reforms in specific policy areas. Where available, the date of the legislation or regulation which introduced the reform is given. A blank on the table means that the information received does not indicate that there has been a reform in the relevant policy area.

For further information on each of the headings used, see the following sections and their subsections of the full archive.

Length of compulsory education

Education Structure (ages 3–19) ⇒ 3.1 Compulsory education and 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3–19)

Promote pre-school education

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.1 Compulsory education and 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3–19)

Primary curriculum

Curricula (age 3–19) ⇒ 5.2 Second phase: Primary

Secondary curriculum

Curricula (age 3–19) ⇒ 5.3. Third phase: Lower secondary or 5.4. Fourth phase: Upper secondary

National assessment

Assessment arrangements (information may be available on the introductory page to a chapter).

Examinations

Assessment arrangements ⇒ 6.3. Third phase: Lower secondary or 6.4. Fourth phase: Upper secondary, age

Table 5

Schooling: duration, phases**Table 5.1 Compulsory education**

	Starting age	Minimum school leaving age	Duration in years
England	5	16	11
Ireland	6	16	10
Northern Ireland	4	16	12
Scotland	4/5	16	11
Wales	5	16	11
France	6	16	10
• Germany	6	15/16+	9/10 Full time + 3 Part time
Hungary	6	18	12
Italy	6	15	9
Netherlands	4/5	18	13
Spain	6	16	10
Sweden	7	16	9
• Switzerland	6/7	15/16	9
• Australia	5/6	15/16/17	9-10
• Canada	6/7	15/16	9-10
Japan	6	15	9
Korea	6	15	9
New Zealand	6	16	10
Singapore	6/7	16/17	10
• South Africa	7	15	9
• USA	6	16	10

Notes

- England** Although children must start school the term after they reach the age of 5 years, many children start school at age 4. The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced a requirement for all young people to participate in (at least part-time) education and training until their 18th birthday. The first cohort to be affected by the changes began secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008. The minimum age at which young people can leave learning will be raised in two stages – to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015.
- Ireland** Although compulsory education does not begin until age 6, more than 50 per cent of 4-year-olds and almost all 5-year-olds are in publicly-funded provision in the infant classes of primary schools.
- Scotland** A child is of school age between 5 and 16; depending on when they are born in the school year they may start at age 4.
- Wales** Although children must start school the term after they reach the age of 5, many children start school at age 4.
- **Germany** Students must complete at least 9 or 10 years of full-time education, followed by 3 years of part-time education (dependent on the jurisdiction).
- Hungary** All 5-year-olds must also attend kindergarten for up to four hours per day to prepare for compulsory school. Since 1998, all students commencing compulsory education have had to remain in education until the age of 18. Previously the upper limit was 16. In principle, there are 8 years' basic education, plus 4 years' upper secondary education.
- Italy** Legislation passed in late 2006 makes provision for compulsory education to last 10 years from age 6 to 16.
- Netherlands** Most (99 per cent) children start school at age 4 although it is not compulsory until the age of 5. Children must attend school full-time until age 16 and must continue learning until they have obtained a basic qualification up to age 18
- Sweden** Although compulsory education begins at age 7, municipalities must allow 6-year-olds to commence compulsory education. Entry may also be deferred to age 8. Children who commence compulsory education at age 6 complete the nine years of compulsory education at age 15; entry at age 8 means completion of compulsory education at age 17.
- **Switzerland** Currently, starting and leaving ages and the duration of compulsory education vary from canton to canton, with nine years being the norm. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has approved a draft agreement to standardise school starting and leaving ages across Switzerland. In line with this agreement, pre-school education would also be compulsory from age 4. The agreement is currently subject to ratification by each canton.

- **Australia** Although 6 is the usual compulsory starting age, most children start school at age 5. In Tasmania, every child who is at least 5 years old on 1 January must be enrolled in the Preparatory Year in a school or be provided with home education. The minimum school leaving age is 15 in most States/Territories, 16 in Tasmania. In Queensland, since January 2006, it has been compulsory for young people to remain in school until they finish year 10 or reach age 16. Unless in full time work, they must then stay in education or training for a further two years or until they have a senior certificate, vocational certificate or have reached the age of 17. Similar arrangements were introduced in Tasmania in January 2008, where, after leaving Year 10, young people must now continue in education or training for two years or until they turn 17.
- **Canada** Although, in most Canadian provinces, education is compulsory to around age 16, in some it is compulsory to 17 or 18. Legislation passed in December 2006, in Ontario, for example, which came into force on the 1 July 2008, extends the length of time a student must attend school to the age of 18, or the completion of secondary school.
- **New Zealand** Although education does not become compulsory until age 6, children almost universally start school at age 5.
- **Singapore** 6 years' primary education is compulsory. The remaining 4 years' formal general education is universal, not compulsory. Children start primary school in January of the year in which they are 7.
- **South Africa** Children normally begin school at age 5, turning 6, for admission into Grade R (reception), or 6 turning 7, for admission into Grade 1. It is intended that, by 2011, all children will attend Grade R.
- **USA** These figures/ages are generalisations. In some states, the kindergarten year (children aged 5-6) is compulsory; in others, students may be expected to stay in compulsory education until the age of 18.

Table 5.2 Educational phases (not necessarily involving transfer from one school to another)

	Pre-school	Primary/basic	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
England	0-5	5-11	11-16	16-18
Ireland	3-4/5/6	4/5/6-12	12-15	15-16/17/18
Northern Ireland	2-4	4-11	11-16	16-18
Scotland	3-5	5-12	12-16	16-18+
Wales	3-5	5-11	11-16	16-18
France	2-6	6-11	11-15	15-18
• Germany	3-6	6-10/12	10/12-15/16	15/16-18/19
Hungary	3-6 (compulsory at age 5)	6-10/12/14	6-10/12/14	10/12/14-18/19
Italy	3-6	6-11	11-14	14-18/19
Netherlands	0-5	5-12	12-15	15-18
Spain	0-6	6-12	12-16	16-18
Sweden	0-6/7	6/7-15/16	6/7-15/16	15-18/16-19
• Switzerland	4/5-6/7	6/7-10,11,12+	10,11,12+-15/16	15/16-18/19
• Australia	3-5/6	5/6-12/13	12/13-15/16	15/16-18+
• Canada	4/5-6/7	6/7-11/12/13	11/12/13-15/16	15/16-17/18+
Japan	3-6	6-12	12-15	15-18
Korea	3-6	6-12	12-15	15-18
New Zealand	3-5/6	5/6-12/13	12/13-16	16-18+
Singapore	3-6/7	6/7-12	12-16/17	16/17-18/19+
• South Africa	0 to 4/5	5/6-12	12-15	15-18
• USA	3-5/6	5/6-13/14	5/6-13/14	13/14-17/18

Notes

- England** The period of education from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has his/her fifth birthday is known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Compulsory education begins the term after a child reaches the age of 5. However, many children begin school at 4+. There are current plans to raise the compulsory age of leaving education and training to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015. Those children entering secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008 were the first cohort to be expected to remain in (at least part-time) education and training until the age of 17.
- Ireland** Although compulsory education does not formally begin until age 6, the majority of 4- and 5-year-old children are in publicly-funded provision in primary school education. At age 15+, students follow either a one-year Transition Year course; three types of two-year Leaving Certificate course; or a three-year course (Transition Year followed by a two-year Leaving Certificate course).
- Wales** The phased introduction of a foundation phase of education for 3- to 7-year-olds began in September 2008. Compulsory education begins the term after a child reaches the age of 5. However, many children begin school at 4+. The introduction of a discrete phase of education for students aged 8 to 14 is planned.
- France** Compulsory education ends at age 16. Students must therefore spend at least one year in the upper secondary phase.
- **Germany** Primary education ends at age 10 in 14 of the 16 Länder, and at age 12 in the remaining two (Berlin and Brandenburg).
- Hungary** Attendance in the kindergarten year, age 5-6, is compulsory. Traditionally, Hungarian secondary education admitted general school leavers aged 14+. It is now increasingly common for secondary schools to admit students aged 10+ or 12+.
- Italy** Primary and lower secondary education compose the first cycle of education in Italy (6- to 14-year-olds). Compulsory education currently ends at 15; students must spend at least one year in the upper secondary phase. Under legislation introduced in 2006, education is to become compulsory until age 16 from the 2009/10 school year. In addition, under new plans for vocational/technical schools to be introduced from 2010/11, the first two years of upper secondary phase education (14- to 16-year-olds) in these schools will be dedicated to general education (maths, Italian etc).
- Sweden** Compulsory phase education is provided in the all-through compulsory school (grundskola) and usually begins at age 7. Children who start earlier (age 6) may finish earlier (age 15) after nine years' compulsory education.
- **Switzerland** Starting and leaving ages and the duration of compulsory education vary from canton to canton. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has, however, approved a draft agreement to make these the same across Switzerland. In August 2009, an agreement to 'harmonise' education systems came into force in 10 of the 26 cantons, making pre-school education compulsory for two years (4-6) rather than one (5-6) as is currently the case in most cantons.
- **South Africa** The Reception Year (Grade R) (age 5-6) is not yet compulsory but it is intended that it will be available to all by 2011. Upper secondary provision (15- to 18-year-olds) is not compulsory.
- **USA** Phases vary dependent on the individual state. The INCA Archive reflects the system of eight-year elementary school, followed by four-year high school. Other jurisdictions have a three-year primary school (includes a kindergarten year), four-year intermediate school, three-year junior high school and three-year senior high; others a five-year elementary

school, three-year middle school and four-year high school.

Sources/Further information

For further information – see the following sections and their subsections of the full archive.

Table 5.1 Compulsory education:

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.1 Compulsory education

Table 5.2 Educational phases:

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19)

Table 6

School structures, access, internal grouping and progression**Table 6.1 School structures**

This table indicates whether:

- there is a unitary system of schools catering for all students (comp)
- distinct school types for students of different educational aptitudes (select)
- or a mixed system offering both types of schools (mixed).

Even where the structure may be common for all, differentiated courses are usually offered, at least at upper secondary level to suit students' abilities and preferences.

	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
England	comp	mixed	mixed
Ireland	comp	comp	comp
Northern Ireland	comp	select	mixed
Scotland	comp	comp	comp
Wales	comp	comp	comp
France	comp	comp	select
• Germany	comp	select	select
Hungary	comp	select	select
Italy	comp	comp	select
Netherlands	comp	mixed	mixed
Spain	comp	comp	mixed
Sweden	comp	comp	comp
• Switzerland	comp	mixed	select
• Australia	comp	comp	comp
• Canada	comp	comp	comp
Japan	comp	comp	select
Korea	comp	comp	select
New Zealand	comp	comp	comp
Singapore	comp	comp	select
• South Africa	comp	comp	comp
• USA	comp	comp	comp

Notes

Northern Ireland

There has, until recently, been a selective system of secondary education, with children taking tests in the final year of primary education to determine selection for the post-primary phase. The last transfer tests were taken in autumn 2008 for entry in September 2009. For 2010 entry, the Government has provided a menu of recommended criteria that schools can choose to use; and schools must have regard to these. Schools are recommended not to use academic criteria but are not precluded from doing so.

Wales

The overwhelming majority of secondary schools in Wales are comprehensive schools. There are no grammar schools, that is schools which are wholly selective by academic ability or aptitude.

Canada

At one time, secondary schools were primarily academic and prepared students for university. Vocational and technical schools were often separate institutions. Although some of these still exist, most secondary schools are now composite and offer both academic and vocational courses.

Table 6.2 Access

This table indicates whether access to educational phases:

- is automatic (open)
- or subject to performance in school leaving certificates or other evidence of performance (cert).

In the case of higher education, this indicates whether holders of relevant upper secondary school certificates (e.g. Baccalauréat in France, Abitur in Germany, VWO in the Netherlands) have automatic right of access to higher education (open) or whether they have to meet additional selection criteria operated by higher education institutions (select).

	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Higher education
England	open	open	cert	select
Ireland	open	open	open	select
Northern Ireland	open	open/cert	cert	select
Scotland	open	open	cert	select
Wales	open	open	cert	select
France	open	open	open	open
• Germany	open	cert	cert	open
Hungary	cert	cert	cert	select
Italy	open	open	cert, age 14	open
Netherlands	open	cert	cert	open
Spain	open	open	cert, age 16	select
Sweden	open	n/a	cert, age 15/16	select
• Switzerland	open	cert	cert	open
• Australia	open	open	open	select
• Canada	open	open	cert	select
Japan	open	open	cert, age 15	select
Korea	open	open	cert, age 15	select
New Zealand	open	open	open	select
Singapore	open	cert	cert	select
• South Africa	open	open	cert, age 15	select
• USA	open	open	open	select

Notes

- Ireland** Although admission to higher education is 'open' students need high scores in the Leaving Certificate examinations to access places on the most sought after programmes.
- Northern Ireland** There has, until recently, been a selective system of secondary education, with children taking tests in the final year of primary education to determine selection for the post-primary phase. However the last transfer tests were taken in autumn 2008 for entry in September 2009. For 2010 entry, the government has provided a menu of recommended criteria that schools can choose to use and schools must have regard to these. Schools are recommended not to use academic criteria but are not precluded from doing so.
- Italy** Until the 2004/05 academic year, students took the primary school leaving examination at age 11. This was required for entry to lower secondary education. The examination has been discontinued as primary and lower secondary now form 'sub-divisions' of the first cycle of education in Italy.
- **Germany** In cases where children, aged 6, are not thought ready to enter primary education, they may be obliged to spend some time in special preparatory classes.
 - Hungary** A certificate confirming a child's attendance in kindergarten education is a pre-requisite for entry to compulsory education.
 - Sweden** Primary and lower secondary compulsory phase education is provided in one 'all-through' school (grundskola).
 - **Switzerland** As in many countries, there are additional higher education entry requirements in certain subject areas, such as medical science, where there is a shortage of places for students.
 - Japan** Students receive an elementary school leaving certificate, but progress automatically from their local elementary school to their local junior high school.
 - **South Africa** Access to post-compulsory education (age 15+) is dependent on successful completion of lower secondary education and achievement of the General Education Training (GET) certificate.

Table 6.3 Internal grouping

This table indicates whether classes are generally defined by age or by ability in different subjects (set). In some cases, grouping by ability applies in some subjects only (age/set), or is introduced from a given class onwards (e.g. age/set Year [Yr] 4). In others, students are grouped both by age and the ability based pathway they have taken (age and set). Beyond the compulsory phase, there is considerable variation and students are most commonly grouped according to the courses they take.

	Primary	Lower secondary
England	age/set	age/set
Ireland	age	age/set
Northern Ireland	age/set	age/set
Scotland	age	age/set
Wales	age/set	age/set
France	age	age
• Germany	age	age and set
Hungary	age/set	age/set
Italy	age	age
Netherlands	age	age and set
Spain	age	age
Sweden	age	age, set at 12+
• Switzerland	age	set
• Australia	age	age/set
• Canada	age	age/set
Japan	age	age
Korea	age/set	age/set
New Zealand	age	age/set
Singapore	age, set at age 10	age and set
• South Africa	age	age
• USA	age/set	age/set

Notes

- Hungary** Classes are generally organised by age regardless of ability but, during lower secondary education, they may be organised by ability in different subjects. Decisions on class grouping are made by the school administration.
- Netherlands** Students in primary education may be grouped by ability in some schools; this procedure is quite rare, however, and students are usually grouped by age.
- **Australia** Teaching groups are generally organised by age. Setting may be practised in some subjects, such as mathematics, from year 7/8 (students age 12/13).
- Korea** Classes are generally organised by age regardless of ability but, since the introduction of the Seventh National Curriculum, some grouping by ability has been introduced.
- New Zealand** Classes are generally grouped by age, but variations do occur with setting by ability for some subjects, such as mathematics and English, or grouping by band.
- **South Africa** Primary level teaching groups are normally organised by age. However, multi-grade classes do exist in areas with low population densities, especially in rural areas. Similar arrangements are also made during secondary education.
- **USA** In elementary schools, children are generally grouped by age with some banding within a class for certain subjects. Grouping by ability may take place in some schools.

Table 6.4 Progression within phases

This table indicates whether students automatically move to the next class (**open**) or whether this is subject to their achieving certain minimum standards (**perf**). In most countries where performance governs progression, the decision is made by all the teachers of the relevant class/year group and includes consultation with parents.

	Primary	Lower secondary
England	open	open
Ireland	open	open
Northern Ireland	open	open
Scotland	open	open
Wales	open	open
France	perf	perf
• Germany	perf	perf
Hungary	perf	perf
Italy	perf	perf
Netherlands	perf	perf
Spain	perf	perf
Sweden	open	perf
• Switzerland	perf	perf
• Australia	open	open
• Canada	open	open/perf
Japan	open	open
Korea	open	open
New Zealand	open	open
Singapore	open	perf
• South Africa	perf	perf
• USA	open/perf	open/perf

Notes

- France** Although automatic promotion is becoming the norm.
- Italy** Progression within primary education is generally open although there are some very rare exceptions.
- Singapore** Generally open in primary education, although some students may be asked to repeat the final year of primary education.
- Sweden** Students normally progress to a higher class. However, after consulting a child's parent, the headteacher may decide not to move a student up (or to transfer a child earlier than would be the norm).
- Spain** Although most students generally progress automatically from one school year to the next, since the 2003/04 academic year children who do not meet the objectives for a given year do not automatically progress to the next year. Instead, they receive additional support to achieve the objectives before being allowed to move on. Generally, however, no child is held back for more than one year.
- **South Africa** Students in South Africa are expected to meet expected levels of performance to progress from one Grade to the next. To reduce the number of students repeating, a new assessment policy, moving the emphasis from year-end exams to continuous performance appraisals has been introduced. This provides struggling students with greater assistance. It is intended that students should not spend more than four years in each phase and should, as a rule, progress with their age group.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables - see the following sections and subsections of the full archive.

Table 6.1 School structures

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19)

Table 6.2 Access

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19) ⇒ 3.2.x.1 Admissions criteria (depending on the phase of education being consulted)

Table 6.3 Internal grouping

Internal school organisation ⇒ Select a phase of education ⇒ 4.x.1 Organisation of teaching groups (depending on the phase of education being consulted)

Table 6.4 Progression within phases

Internal school organisation ⇒ Select a phase of education ⇒ 4.x.2 Student progression through the phase (depending on the phase of education being consulted)

Table 7

Primary curriculum

The tables below give an indication of the range of subjects covered without reflecting the content, status (compulsory or elective) or length of time for which a subject is studied. The table does not reflect the inter-disciplinary manner in which subjects are often taught in this phase. Individual Country Archives provide such detailed information. 'Optional' means that a child's parents may request that the child does not study religious education. 'Some' indicates that schools may choose whether to offer religious education within their programmes.

	National language (and literature)	Alternative language/ regional language or mother tongue*	First foreign language	Mathematics/arithmetic	Science	Environment	Information technology	Technology	History	Geography	Society/social studies/ civics/economic awareness	The arts/cultural awareness/drama	Arts/crafts/fine arts	Music/dance	PE/sport/movement	Health	Moral education/ethics	Religious education	Homemaking/domestic skills	Social skills /life skills	European dimension/ multiculturalism
England	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•
Ireland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional		•	•
N. Ireland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•
Wales	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•
Scotland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•
France	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Germany	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•
Hungary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some	•	•	•
Italy	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional		•	
Netherlands	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional		•	•
Spain	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional		•	•
Sweden	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Switzerland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Australia	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some	•	•	•
Canada	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some optional	•	•	•
Japan	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some private	•	•	•
Korea	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some private	•	•	•
New Zealand	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some		•	•
Singapore	•	•		•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some		•	•
South Africa	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	some		•	•
USA	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

*Alternative language may be either a regional language or mother tongue language

Notes

- France** Although public-sector schools in France are secular, which means that religious education is not taught as a subject in its own right (except, for historical reasons, in three 'départements'), aspects of religious education are taught in other curriculum subjects, with a view to expanding students' cultural knowledge and understanding of world events.
- Spain** Since the beginning of the 2007/08 school year, information and communication technology has been taught from the beginning of primary education as part of the implementation of the 2006 Law on Education (LOE).
- Singapore** English is regarded as an official/national language rather than as a foreign language.
- **South Africa** A review of the content of general education and training (GET) is currently underway

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables, see the following sections and subsections of the full archive.

Table 7 Primary curriculum

Curricula (age 3-19) ⇒ 5.2 Second phase: Primary ⇒ 5.2.2 Compulsory subjects or 5.2.3 Optional/elective subjects

Table 8

Lower secondary curriculum (to age 15/16)

The subject listings in the tables below are drawn from the documentation received from participating countries as forming the curriculum at the lower secondary level, which usually coincides with the compulsory full-time secondary education requirement. The tables 'convert' them into comparable subject headings to give an indication of the range of subjects covered without reflecting the content, the compulsory or elective status of a subject or the length of time for which the subject is studied. 'Optional' in this table indicates that parents may specifically request that their child(ren) should not study religious education. 'Some' indicates that schools may choose whether to offer religious education. All countries provide science as a curriculum subject. In some countries/school types it is taught as 'general science'; in others it is broken down into individual subjects, e.g. biology, chemistry, geology and physics.

	National language (and literature)	Alternative language*	First foreign language	Foreign language 2,3 etc.	Mathematics	Science	Environment	Technology/technical education	IT/computer literacy	Classics (Latin/ Greek)	History	Geography	Society/social studies/ civics/politics	Economics/business	The arts/cultural awareness/drama	Arts/crafts/fine arts	Music/dance	PE/sport	Health	Moral education/ethics	Religious education	Homemaking/domestic skills	Social/life skills/sex education	Careers	European dimension/ multiculturalism
England	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•	•
Ireland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•	
N. Ireland	•	•	•		•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional		•	•	
Wales	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•	•
Scotland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•	•
France	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
Germany	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional	•	•	•	•
Hungary	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some	•	•	•	•
Italy	•		•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•			optional				
Netherlands	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some				
Spain	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	optional		•	•	•
Sweden	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Switzerland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•					•		
Australia	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some	•	•	•	•
Canada	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some	•	•	•	•
Japan	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some private	•	•		•
Korea	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•
New Zealand	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some		•	•	•
Singapore	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some		•		•
South Africa	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	some		•	•	•
USA	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

*Alternative language may be either a regional language or mother tongue language.

Notes

- Ireland** The European dimension is an aspect of all curriculum areas, rather than a specific identifiable feature/subject.
- France** Following revisions to the primary curriculum, new programmes of study were introduced to lower secondary education at the start of the 2009 school year. Although public-sector schools in France are secular, which means that religious education is not taught as a subject in its own right (except, for historical reasons, in three départements), aspects of religious education are taught in other curriculum subjects with a view to expanding students' cultural knowledge and understanding of world events.
- Spain** Since the beginning of the 2007/08 school year, eight curriculum competencies have replaced the subject areas. However, in general, the same subjects are covered.
- **South Africa** In addition to two compulsory languages, a learner may add further approved languages (either foreign or official). In 2010, a review of the content of general education and training (GET) is underway.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables, see the following sections and subsections of the full archive:

Table 8 – Lower secondary curricula –

Curricula (age 3-19) ⇒ 5.3. Third phase: Lower secondary ⇒ 5.3.2 Compulsory subjects **AND** 5.3.3 Optional/elective subjects

Table 9

National assessment and public examination arrangements

Table 9.1 National standardised assessment system

All systems feature ongoing teacher assessment, which sometimes determines student progression between classes. This is NOT shown in the tables. Figures indicate the ages at which standardised national assessment takes place. In the federal states, a 'yes' is only included where there is standardised national testing, for example, the Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP). See the notes for details of federal/state assessments.

Bold figures indicate that assessments are compulsory or essential for admission to the next phase.

	National standardised assessment system	At school entry	During compulsory primary education	During compulsory secondary education
England	yes	5	7,8,9,10, 11	14
Ireland	yes	no	7, 10	
Northern Ireland	yes	no	4-11	11-14
Scotland	yes	varies	varies and SSA at 8, 10 and 12	varies and SSA at 14
Wales	yes	4/5	7, 11	14
France	yes	no	8, 10/11	11, 14/15
Germany	no	6	no	
Hungary	yes	6	10	12/14/16
Italy	yes	no	7/8, 10/11	11/12, 13/14
Netherlands	yes	no	12 for most	14/15
Spain	yes	no	9, INCE -12	INCE - 16
Sweden	yes	no	9	12, 14, 16
Switzerland	no	no	no	no
Australia	yes	no	8/9 10/11	12/13 14/15
Canada	yes	no	varies	varies
Japan	yes	no	12	15
Korea	yes	no	12	15, 16
New Zealand	yes	5/6	8/9	12/13
Singapore	yes	no	10, 12	
South Africa	yes	no	8/9, 11/12,	14-15
USA	yes	varies	varies	varies

Notes

- England** Children must attend school from the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday; most receive some form of early years education prior to this date in the pre-compulsory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (0- to 5-year-olds). At the end of the EYFS, the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Profile' – practitioners' observations of children's achievements across six areas of learning – sums up each child's development and learning achievements. Statutory assessment at ages 7, 11 and 14 involves teacher assessment and/or externally set national tests.
- Ireland** Standardised tests were introduced in primary education during the 2007 calendar year. Schools are free to decide when children should take the tests – either at the end of Year 1 or at the start of Year 2 (aged 7), and at the end of Year 4 or the beginning of Year 5 (aged 10).
- Northern Ireland** Statutory assessment arrangements for children at the end of key stages 1-3 (aged 4-14) have recently been replaced by annual teacher assessment.
- Scotland** Teachers decide when children aged between 5 and 14 years of age should take National Assessments. The Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) is the national sampling programme of assessment to monitor standards in English, mathematics, science and certain other subjects.
- Wales** There is statutory teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 1 (children aged 7), Key Stage 2 (age 11) and at the end of Key Stage 3, age 14.
- France** A nursery school "record of achievement" is kept and passed on to a child's first compulsory level school. Student achievement in French and mathematics against the new programmes of study (introduced in 2008) is assessed twice during primary education.
- **Germany** There is a national, standardised marking system across all Länder and for all levels of schooling, and an agreement on recognition/standardisation of the Abitur (upper secondary leaving certificate/higher education access certificate). Common standards for lower secondary examinations in a range of subjects have begun to be introduced. Plans are also in place to introduce standards in primary education. National tests to assess performance against the standards are scheduled to take place. Children are evaluated, usually by the school doctor, to judge their maturity/readiness for school. In some cases, alternative provision is recommended.
- Hungary** Centralised tests, the National Assessment of Basic Competencies (NABC), comprising tests in mathematics and reading/literacy were first introduced in Grades 6, 8 and 10 (students aged 12, 14 and 16 respectively) in 2004. The second round of NABC testing also tested students in Grade 4 (age 10).
- Italy** Until the 2004/05 academic year, students took the primary school leaving examination at age 11 which was required to gain access to lower secondary school. This has now been discontinued as primary and secondary education form 'sub-divisions' of the first cycle of education in Italy. INVALSI, the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System, has developed new standardised tests to assess students' skills and knowledge at specific points in the education system. The tests, in Italian, mathematics and science, which began to be formally introduced in the 2007/08 school year, are administered to a sample of schools and to students in Years 2 and 5 of primary education (aged 7/8 and 10/11 respectively); in Years 1 and 3 of lower secondary education (ages 11/12 and 13/14); and in Years 2 and 5 of post-compulsory upper secondary education (aged 15/16 and 18/19).

- Netherlands** Tests are supplied by the National Institute of Educational Measurement (CITO) to evaluate whether students have achieved the attainment targets of the compulsory core curriculum for lower secondary education. These tests may be taken after two years of the course (age 14) or at the end of the three-year period of lower secondary education, age 15. CITO also produces the national tests taken at the end of primary education (age 12). Although not compulsory, these are used by the majority of primary schools.
- Spain** There are (INCE) national sample surveys of student attainment on completion of compulsory primary and secondary education (students aged 12 and 16 years respectively). Following the passing of the 2006 Law on Education (LOE), national testing for 9-year-olds began in 2008/09. Testing of 11-year-olds will begin in 2009/10.
- **Switzerland** Although there is no system of standardised national assessment in Switzerland, new national standards in a range of subjects are under development.
- **Australia** In Victoria, school entry assessment is compulsory. In May 2008, the first national tests in literacy and numeracy were taken by students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (ages 8/9, 10/11, 12/13, and 14/15) as part of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The national curriculum, to be introduced from 2011, will have aligned assessment and reporting arrangements.
- **Canada** There is periodic national assessment via the Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP) which is coordinated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Several provinces implement provincial testing/assessment programmes for specific subjects (literacy and numeracy, in particular), and specific age groups, during primary and secondary education.
- Japan** New national standardised tests were introduced for all 12- and 15-year-olds in April 2007. The tests which assess pupils in Japanese and mathematics take place in April.
- Korea** National assessment of educational achievement via scholastic achievement tests (SATs) for small samples of students in some year groups.
- New Zealand** A sample in the National Educational Monitoring Project (NEMP) at ages 8/9 and 12/13. In addition, national standards, which set out descriptions of what students should know and be able to do in reading, writing and mathematics at different points in their schooling from years 1 to 8 (aged 5 to 13) were introduced in 2010.
- Singapore** Children take school-based examinations in English, the mother tongue, mathematics and science at the end of Primary 4 (age 10). On the basis of their performance in these exams, they may go on to study these subjects at 'Standard' or 'Foundation' level (or 'Higher Level' in the case of the mother tongue). At age 12, the end of primary education, the school decides at which level to enter the child in each subject in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE).
- **South Africa** There is currently no formal policy on assessment during pre-school education. This is proposed, however, in a draft curriculum for children from birth to age 4/5. Systematic evaluation is conducted on a nationally representative sample of learners and learning sites. After each systematic evaluation, a 'national report card' is produced. Following a recent review, development of a new assessment system for the general education and training (GET) band is underway in 2010..
- **USA** The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as "the Nation's Report Card," is a regularly administered, congressionally mandated assessment programme, which assesses representative national samples of

students attending public and private elementary (primary) schools, junior high (lower secondary) schools and high schools (upper secondary schools). The Obama administration's blueprint for the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) continues to require some form of state assessment.

Table 9.2 National examination or certification framework to mark the end of an educational phase

All systems feature ongoing teacher assessment, which frequently determines student progression between classes. This is NOT shown in the tables. Figures indicate the ages at which national certification/public examinations take place.

Bold figures indicate that examinations/certification are compulsory or essential for admission to the next phase.

	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary
England	no	16	17/18
Ireland	no	15	17/18
Northern Ireland	no	16	17/18
Scotland	no	16	17/18
Wales	no	16	17/18
France	no	15	16+/18
• Germany	no	15/16	18/19
Hungary	no	no	18+
Italy	no	14	18/19
Netherlands	12	14/15	16, 17, 18
Spain	no	16	18
Sweden	n/a	16	18/19
• Switzerland	no	no	18+
• Australia	no	no	18+
• Canada	no	no	18/19
Japan	no	14+/15	18
Korea	no	15	18
New Zealand	no	16	17/18
Singapore	12	16/17	18+
• South Africa	no	15	18
• USA	no	varies	18

Notes

England

Students in schools generally study for General Certificate of Education Advanced-level examinations (GCE A-levels). They are single-subject examinations, which may be studied in any combination, within the limitation of a school's timetable and the range of subjects it offers. Since September 2000, GCE A-levels have been structured as follows:

- AS – During the first year of post-compulsory education in the sixth form (Year 12, age 16 to 17), students typically take four or five subjects leading to the GCE Advanced Subsidiary qualification (AS) (GCE AS qualification). AS-levels are stand-alone qualifications and each consists of three units.
- A2 – Taken in the second year of sixth form (Year 13, students aged 17 to 18), this is the second half of the full A-level qualification, consisting of a further three units. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2.

Northern Ireland

Students in schools generally study for General Certificate of Education Advanced-level examinations (GCE A-levels). They are single-subject examinations, which may be studied in any combination, within the limitation of a school's timetable and the range of subjects it offers. Since September 2000, GCE A-levels have been structured as follows:

- AS – During the first year of post-compulsory education in the sixth form (Year 12, age 16 to 17), students typically take four or five subjects leading to the GCE Advanced Subsidiary qualification (AS) (GCE AS qualification). AS-levels are stand-alone qualifications and each consists of three units.
- A2 – Taken in the second year of sixth form (Year 13, students aged 17 to 18), this is the second half of the full A-level qualification, consisting of a further three units. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2.

Wales

Students in schools generally study for General Certificate of Education Advanced-level examinations (GCE A-levels). They are single-subject examinations, which may be studied in any combination, within the limitation of a school's timetable and the range of subjects it offers. Since September 2000, GCE A-levels have been structured as follows:

- AS – During the first year of post-compulsory education in the sixth form (Year 12, age 16 to 17), students typically take four or five subjects leading to the GCE Advanced Subsidiary qualification (AS) (GCE AS qualification). AS-levels are stand-alone qualifications and each consists of three units.
- A2 – Taken in the second year of sixth form (Year 13, students aged 17 to 18), this is the second half of the full A-level qualification, consisting of a further three units. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2.

France

All students take the lower secondary leaving examination ('diplome national du brevet') at age 15. Various vocational qualifications are available at age 16+; the *Baccalauréat* at age 18.

- **Germany** In each Land, there are secondary school leaving examinations of various types at age 15/16. There is national agreement on the content of the Abitur examination (the upper secondary leaving examination which is required for university entry).

Italy

Until the 2004/05 academic year, students took the primary school leaving examination at age 11 which was required to gain access to lower secondary school. This has now been discontinued as primary and secondary education form 'sub-divisions' of the first cycle of education in Italy.

Sweden

Primary and lower secondary compulsory phase education is provided in one 'all-through' school (grundskola).

- **Switzerland** In some cantons, there is an examination during the final year of primary education (age 10, 11 or 12 depending on the canton) which may, in combination with other factors, influence lower secondary entry. Again, in some cantons, at the end of lower secondary education (age 15/16), students can take a written and oral examination in their main subjects to obtain a leaving certificate.

Korea Entrance tests, combined with continuous assessment results and lottery allocation, govern access to high school, age 15+. The College Scholastic Achievement Test, taken at age 18 (on completion of high school), governs entry to higher education.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables, see the following sections and subsections of the full archive:

Table 9.1 National standardised assessment system

Assessment arrangements ⇒ Select a phase of education.

Thematic probes ⇒ August 2007: Compulsory assessment systems in the INCA countries

Table 9.2 National examination or certification framework to mark the end of an educational phase

Assessment arrangements ⇒ Select a phase of education.

Table 10

Control and supply of school textbooks

This table outlines:

- who produces textbooks (state or commercial bodies)
- whether the State (or devolved authority) prescribes content etc. of textbooks
- whether the State (or devolved authority) draws up a list of authorised textbooks
- who selects textbooks for use in class
- whether textbooks are provided free by the State (or devolved authority), or whether parents are required to buy them.

	Textbook production	State provides list of approved textbooks	Choice of books for use in class	Textbook provision
England	Commercial	No	Teachers – free choice	School provides/lends
Ireland	Commercial. Ministry provides guidelines and may produce/commission materials for distribution.	No	Teachers – free choice	Parents usually buy or rent from schools. Some state subsidies available.
N. Ireland	Commercial	No	Teachers – free choice	School provides
Scotland	Commercial	No	Teachers – with consultation of school board	School provides
Wales	Commercial	No	Teachers – free choice	School provides (on loan)
France	Commercial – state approved. Local/regional associations and documentation centres may produce teaching materials to supplement those published for national use.	State prescribes content and format, approves all textbooks for use in schools, and provides list of approved texts.	Teachers – from list of approved textbooks	Compulsory education - school provides. Post-compulsory, parents usually buy.
Germany	Commercial – Länder approved	Land prescribes cost, content, format and quality and provides list of approved textbooks. RE textbooks are approved with the agreement of the church authorities.	Teachers – from approved textbooks list. Sometimes subject to Schools' Inspectorate approval or consultation with representatives of parents and children.	School provides (on loan)
Hungary	Commercial (state approval). The State underwrites bank loans to publishing companies.	State generally prescribes content, approves and provides recommended list. Teachers are free to select other material, in addition.	Teachers – generally from recommended list, but can select additional material.	Parents buy (subsidised prices) (assistance for needy). Textbooks for minority language education must be provided by the State.
Italy	Commercial	State issues guidance on cost and frequency of updates, but does not prescribe or approve.	Council of teachers – free choice	Provided free at primary level. Parents usually buy thereafter; increasing financial assistance available to low income families.
Netherlands	Commercial	No (Ministry prescribes educational attainment targets but does not prescribe or produce specific teaching materials.)	Teachers – free choice	School provides at primary level (on loan). At secondary level, parents often buy books. Many schools may have book funds and provide loan books.

continued

	Textbook production	State provides list of approved textbooks	Choice of books for use in class	Textbook provision
Spain	Commercial under state supervision. Centre for Educational Research and Documentation (CIDE) assists in development/ dissemination of curriculum materials and teacher guides.	No general prescription, but the Autonomous Community (via the regional/local education authority) usually provides a recommended list.	Schools/teachers – usually from recommended list.	Parents usually buy. Increasing financial aid available for low income families.
Sweden	Commercial	No	Teachers - free choice	School provides.
• Switzerland	Cantons (compulsory phase)	Cantons usually prescribe content and provide recommended lists for compulsory phase.	Teachers – usually from recommended list; free choice for upper secondary.	School provides. Upper secondary (post-compulsory) parents buy.
• Australia	Mostly commercial. Boards of Studies may publish support materials.	No	Teachers – free choice	Parents generally buy (or pay a levy to schools for book hire).
• Canada	Commercial (by approval). Provinces produce and pilot books.	Province or territory usually provides recommended list of approved titles.	District or school usually from recommended list.	School usually provides free of charge
Japan	Commercial with state approval, or state-produced.	State-approved, commercially produced. (Some state-approved and state-produced textbooks with prescribed content.)	Local boards of education or headteachers determine which books will be used from prescribed list.	In compulsory education, all students receive new books, free, each year. Post-compulsory, parents/students buy.
Korea	State, or commercial with state authorisation or approval.	Ministry compiles some and authorises or approves other textbooks.	Single textbook replaced by range of government-copyrighted and approved textbooks for individual subjects, enabling teachers to choose.	Provided free at primary level (6-12) (and students may keep, as in Japan). Thereafter, parents buy but costs are kept low.
New Zealand	State and commercial. (Learning Media, a crown-owned company, publishes a range of resources free to schools. Use is not mandatory.)	No	Teachers - free choice	School provides (loaned, parents contribute for damage or loss). Parents buy supplementary materials, particularly at post-compulsory upper secondary level.
Singapore	State and commercial with state approval	State prescribes content and produces Approved Textbook List (ATL). All books on the ATL are approved by the Ministry for five years.	Teachers - from ATL	Parents buy, free for needy
• South Africa	Commercial	Textbooks must be aligned to the National Curriculum Statements	Procurement and delivery of textbooks is a provincial responsibility. In upper secondary, schools chose from a national catalogue.	School provides
• USA	Commercial (dominated by about ten main corporations).	About half of the States recommend textbooks after some process of review against State curriculum guidelines.	Teacher (or school committee) choice; in about half of the States from approved list. (In California, for example, schools may only opt out of the state-recommended textbook system with an official waiver.)	In most States, schools provide books to students free of charge. Some States charge all but the most needy. Others may request a contribution from students in high school (age 14+) in particular.

Notes

England	There are, however, set texts for certain examination syllabuses. In addition, the programmes of study for English at Key Stages 1-4 contain criteria and categories from which to select the range of reading.
Wales	There are, however, set texts for certain examination syllabuses. In addition, the programmes of study for English at Key Stages 1-4 contain criteria and categories from which to select the range of reading.
Northern Ireland	There are, however, set texts for certain examination syllabuses.
Sweden	Occasionally some post-compulsory schools (students aged 16+)- may request a parental contribution for certain items.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on of the content of these tables - see the following sections and subsections of the full archive:

Curricula (age 3-19) ⇒ Select a phase of education ⇒ 5.x.6 Curriculum materials

Table 11

Steps to becoming a teacher

Table 11.1 Steps to becoming a primary school teacher

- The **consecutive** model: a programme of professional education training is undertaken once an undergraduate degree has been obtained.
- The **concurrent** model: teacher training is combined with a degree which results in the award of a Bachelor of Education degree or similar.
- The **combined** model: a joint degree in education and a specific subject.
- **Length of training** for the consecutive route includes the time taken to obtain a first degree. On-the-job training tends to last one to two years.

	Length of training	Type of training available			On-the-job training	Probationary period	Registration necessary
		Concurrent	Combined	Consecutive			
England	Between 3 and 5 years	•		•	•	1 year	•
Ireland	3/4 years	•		•		1 year	•
N. Ireland	Between 3 and 5 years	•		•		1 year	•
Scotland	4 years	•		•		1 year	•
Wales	Between 3 and 5 years	•		•	•	1 year	•
France	5 years			•		1 year	•
Germany	5 years	•				2.5 years	•
Hungary	4 years	•	•				
Italy	4 years	•				1 year	•
Netherlands	4 years	•				Discretionary	
Spain	3/4 years	•				3 months to 1 year	•
Sweden	3 to 5.5 years	•				1 year	
Switzerland	3 years	•					
Australia	Between 4 and 5 years	•	•	•		Three months to 1 year	•
Canada	4/5 years	•	•	•		In some provinces	•
Japan	4 years	•				1 year	•
Korea	4 years	•					
New Zealand	Between 3 and 4 years	•		•		2 years	•
Singapore	2 to 4 years	•		•		1 year	
South Africa	4 years	•		•			•
USA	4/5 years	•	•	•	•	1 to 3 years	•

Notes

- England** Traditionally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- Ireland** Generally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- N. Ireland** Traditionally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- Wales** Traditionally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- **Germany** Training consists of two phases: 3 to 4 years of university studies followed by 1.5 to 2 years of preparatory 'on-the-job' training.
- **Spain** New arrangements for teacher training were announced following the Organic Law of Education (LOE). This will increase the length of training from 3 to 4 years.
- Singapore** A two-year qualification only entitles the holder to teach in a primary school. Although there is no formal registration process, teachers are appointed by the state or its local arm and thus are informally registered. They must also serve a three-year teaching bond.
- **South Africa** Although the concurrent and consecutive training models exist, the concurrent is preferred. Teachers must register with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).
- **USA** The concurrent programme usually lasts for 4 years. The probationary period may last between 1 to 3 years depending on the State.

Table 11.2: Steps to becoming a lower secondary school teacher

- The consecutive model: a programme of professional education training is undertaken once an undergraduate degree has been obtained.
- The concurrent model: teacher training is combined with a degree which results in the award of a Bachelor of Education degree or similar.
- The combined model: a joint degree in education and a specific subject .
- Length of training for the consecutive route includes the time taken to obtain a first degree. On-the-job training tends to last one to two years.

	Length of training	Type of training available				Probationary period	Registration necessary
		Concurrent	Combined	Consecutive	On-the-job training		
England	Between 3 and 5 years	•		•	•	1 year	•
Ireland	4 /5 years	•		•		1 year	•
N. Ireland	Between 3 and 5 years	•		•		1 year	•
Scotland	4/5 years	•	•	•		1 year	•
Wales	Between 3 and 5 years	•		•	•	1 year	•
France	Between 5 and 6 years			•			•
• Germany	6+ years	•				2.5 years	•
Hungary	4/5 years	•	•				
Italy	5 years			•		1 year	•
Netherlands	4 years	•	•	•		Discretionary	
Spain	Between 5 and 7 years		•	•		1 year	•
Sweden	Between 4.5 and 5.5 years	•				1 year	
• Switzerland	4 years	•					
• Australia	4 5 years	•	•	•		Three months to 1 year	•
• Canada	4/5 years	•	•	•		In some provinces	•
Japan	4 years	•				1 year	•
Korea	4 years	•		•			
New Zealand	Between 4 and 6 years	•	•	•		2 years	•
Singapore	4/5 years	•		•		1 year	•
• South Africa	4 years	•		•			•
• USA	4/5 years	•	•	•	•	1 to 3 years	•

Notes

- England** Traditionally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- Ireland** Generally, the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- N. Ireland** Traditionally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- Wales** Traditionally the concurrent route has been chosen by those intending to be primary school teachers and the consecutive by those intending to teach in secondary schools.
- France** Six years of training generally leads to an Agrégation, with which teachers work in lycée. Only a handful of 'professeurs agrégés' teach in lower secondary schools.
- **Germany** Training consists of two phases: 3 to 4 years of university studies followed by 1.5 to 2 years of preparatory 'on-the-job' training.
- **Spain** Following the introduction of the LOE (legislation passed in 2006), some changes may be made to the organisation of teacher training for this phase.
- **South Africa** Although the concurrent and consecutive training models exist, the concurrent is preferred. Teachers must register with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).
- **USA** The probationary period may last between 1 to 3 years depending on the State.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables, see the following sections and subsections of the full archive:

Table 11.1 Steps to becoming a primary school teacher

Initial Teacher Training ⇒ 7.2 Second phase, compulsory primary education ⇒ 7.2.2 Types of training courses and institutions

Table 11.2 Steps to becoming a lower secondary school teacher

Initial Teacher Training ⇒ 7.3 Third phase, compulsory lower secondary education) ⇒ 7.3.2 Types of training courses and institutions or 7.4 Fourth phase, post-compulsory upper secondary education (in schools) ⇒ 7.4.2 Types of training courses and institutions.

Table 12

Special educational needs teacher training

	Specialist initial teacher training	Post qualification specialisation	Special needs education part of initial teacher training
England		•	•
Ireland		•	•
Northern Ireland		•	•
Scotland		•	•
Wales		•	•
France		•	
• Germany	•	•	
Hungary	•		•
Italy		•	•
Netherlands		•	•
Spain	•		•
Sweden		•	•
• Switzerland		•	•
• Australia	•	•	•
• Canada	•	•	•
Japan	•	•	
Korea	•	•	
New Zealand		•	
Singapore	•	•	
• South Africa		•	
• USA	•	•	•

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables see the following sections of the full archive.

Select the country ⇒ Initial teacher training ⇒ Special

Table 13

Recruitment incentives to encourage individuals to train as teachers

Recruitment incentives include the payment of course tuition fees by the Government.

Where no recruitment incentives are highlighted we have not found evidence that any exist.

	Primary education		Compulsory secondary education	
	All subjects	Shortage subjects	All subjects	Shortage subjects
England	•		•	•
Ireland				
Northern Ireland				
Scotland				
Wales	•		•	•
France				
• Germany				
Hungary				
Italy				
Netherlands	•		•	•
Spain	•		•	•
Sweden				•
• Switzerland				
• Australia	•		•	•
• Canada	•		•	
Japan				
Korea				
New Zealand	•			•
Singapore	•		•	•
• South Africa				
• USA	•	•		•

Notes

- **South Africa** Proposals exist to establish a national bursary scheme for those entering initial teacher training.

Source/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of the above table – see the following section of the full archive.

Select the country ⇒ Initial teacher training ⇒ Choose a phase of education ⇒ 7.x.7. and its subsections.

Table 14

Organising bodies responsible for initial teacher training

- **National Ministry:** The Ministry of Education in each country which determines and funds broad policies dealing with the 'national interest'.
- **Federal Ministry:** State Ministry of Education, responsible for education in the specific state/province.
- **Statutory body:** Body independent from government which was established by legislation.
- **Non-departmental public body:** Body set up, sometimes under statute, to carry out specific functions on behalf of government. However, although non-departmental public bodies are government funded, they are not government departments or part of government departments.
- **Local authority:** Regional education headquarters; the local arm of the Ministry of Education.

	Standards for teaching qualification	Responsibilities of organising bodies	
		Teacher training curriculum guidance/standards	Registration agency
England	National Ministry	Non-departmental public body	Statutory body
Ireland	National Ministry/Statutory body	Statutory body/individual universities	Statutory body
Northern Ireland	National Ministry	National Ministry	Statutory body
Scotland	National Ministry	National Ministry	Statutory body
Wales	Non-departmental public body	Non-departmental public body	Statutory body
France	National Ministry	National Ministry	Local authority
Germany	Federal Ministry	Federal Ministry	Federal Ministry
Hungary	National Ministry	National Ministry/individual universities	n/a
Italy	National Ministry	National Ministry	Local authority
Netherlands	National Ministry	National Ministry/individual universities	n/a
Spain	National Ministry	National Ministry	Local authority
Sweden	National Ministry	National Ministry/individual universities	n/a
Switzerland	National Ministry	National Ministry	National Ministry
Australia	National Ministry or statutory body and federal ministry	Federal Ministry or statutory body	Statutory body
Canada	Federal Ministry or statutory body	Federal Ministry or statutory body	Federal Ministry or statutory body
Japan	National Ministry	National Ministry	Local authority
Korea	National Ministry	Teacher training institutions	Local authority
New Zealand	Statutory body	Statutory body	Statutory body
Singapore	National Ministry	National Ministry	National Ministry
South Africa	National Ministry	National Ministry	Statutory body
USA	Federal Ministry	Federal Ministry	Federal Ministry

Notes

- England** The coalition elected in May 2010 plans to close the General Teaching Council for England which is the regulatory body for the teaching profession.
- Ireland** The Ministry is responsible for the standards for obtaining a teaching qualification for primary education, while a Statutory Body (The Registration Council for Secondary Teachers) is responsible for the standards for secondary education. Individual universities are responsible for the content of the teacher training curriculum for primary education, while a Statutory Body (The Registration Council for Secondary Teachers) has overall responsibility for the secondary teacher training curriculum. In 2006, a Teaching Council was established in Ireland. Its role includes promoting teaching as profession, the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers and the regulation of standards in the profession.
- **Australia** While the States and Territories retain control of their own education systems, a national education and training framework is emerging through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), including the 2003 National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching.
- USA** Although, most responsibility lies with the federal ministries in the individual states, to qualify for certain funding strands, states must meet certain national requirements.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the context of the above table – see the following sections of the full archive.

Initial Teacher Training ⇒ Choose a phase of education ⇒ 7.x.1 Control and regulation

Table 15

Organisation of school year and school day

Table 15.1 Organisation of the school year

This table aims to show, at a glance, the organisation of the school year, which includes when the school year starts, the number of terms and length of main holiday. It is not an exact representation – for example the break in March/April in England and the other home countries is not generally a month long but may take place at any time between mid-March and April depending on the timing of Easter. This situation may be present in other countries. There may be mid-term breaks of up to a week which are not included in this table.

The table presents the length of the school year, in days or weeks as expressed in the policy documents of the country concerned. Level of responsibility refers to the body responsible for organising the school year within the statutory number of day/weeks for the school year.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	School year	Level of responsibility	
England							6 weeks						190 days	Local/school	
Ireland							10 or 12 weeks						179 or 183 days	School	
Northern Ireland							8 weeks						200 days	Local/school	
Scotland							6 weeks						190 days (min)	Local	
Wales							6 weeks						190 days	Local/school	
France							7-8 weeks						180 days	National	
• Germany							6 weeks						188-208 days	Federal	
Hungary							10 - 11 weeks						185 days	State	
Italy							12 -13 weeks						200 days	State	
Netherlands							6 – 7 weeks						200 days	State	
Spain							11 weeks						175-180 days	Federal	
Sweden							10 weeks						40 weeks	Local	
• Switzerland							5-9 weeks						38 weeks	Federal	
• Australia													200 days	State	
• Canada							5-6 weeks						180-200 days	School	
Japan													35 weeks	Local	
Korea							70 days						45 days	State	
New Zealand													190-197 days	State	
Singapore													6 weeks	State	
South Africa													195-200 days	Province	
• USA													10-11 weeks	180 days	School

Key	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Main holiday	Other holiday
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Notes

- England** In England, schools must be open for at least 380 half day sessions each school year. The dates of school terms are not fixed nationally; they are set, depending on the legal category of the school, by the local authority (LA) or school governing body. Although school holidays generally cover the same core periods, exact dates may vary between schools and authorities.
- There is currently some movement towards the adoption of a standard school year, which would be consistent year on year. A number of LAs have begun to introduce this model.
- Ireland** 183 days in primary education, six- to 12-year-olds; 179 days in secondary education 12-to-15-year-olds.
- Wales** In Wales, schools must be open for at least 380 half day sessions each school year. The dates of school terms are not fixed nationally; they are set, depending on the legal category of the school, by the local authority (LA) or school governing body. Although school holidays generally cover the same core periods, exact dates may vary between schools and authorities.
- France** The school calendar is fixed by the Minister for National Education, who also determines the dates of school holidays in each of the three zones in metropolitan France. There are three distinct zones (A, B and C) to ensure staggered holidays.
- **Germany** Teaching may be organised on the basis of a five-or six-day week. Following the five-day week model, teaching usually takes place on 188 days a year on average and 208 days for the six-day week model.
- Hungary** There are three, one-week holidays during the autumn, winter and spring, and a long summer break.
- Italy** The Ministry of Public Education sets guidelines for terms and holiday periods, the dates of public holidays and final examinations. Since 1999, headteachers have had some flexibility in implementing these.
- Netherlands** Dates for the summer holidays are decided by the Ministry; the main holiday period is staggered over the three regions (northern, central and southern) into which the country is divided for this purpose (compulsory dates for all schools); all other holidays are recommended by the Ministry. The Minister recommends a period of one week's holiday after every seven to eight weeks of school.
- Spain** 175 days at secondary level (12+), 180 days for six-to 12-year-olds in primary education.
- Sweden** The teaching year comprises 40 weeks which should not be less than 178 working days and not more than 190.
- **Australia** In Tasmania, exceptionally, there are 3 terms.
 - **Canada** The school year averages 180 to 200 teaching days over the period from September to late June.
- Japan** The statutory minimum length of the elementary school year (minimum number of teaching weeks per year) is 35 weeks. For children in Year 1, however, it is 34 weeks.
- New Zealand** 197 days in primary phase education (five- to-12-year olds); 190 days for 12/13- to 16-year-olds (expressed as half day sessions). The Ministry of Education sets term dates but schools have limited flexibility in implementing them.
- **USA** This is a common standard but it varies by state. Local school boards must comply with State schoolyear requirements.

Table 15.2 Organisation of the school week and day

This table looks in more detail at how the teaching week is organised. Teaching time is per week unless otherwise stated; some systems specify teaching time per year.

Level of responsibility refers to the body responsible for organising the school day within the statutory teaching time per week.

	Teaching time per week	School day	School week							Teaching periods	Level of responsibility
			M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S		
England	Min 21 hours, age 5-7 Min 23.5 hours, age 7-11 Min 24 hours, age 11-14 Min 25 hours, age 14-16	9am-3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Ireland	Min 915 hours/year, age 6-12 Average 40 period week, at age 12-15	9am-3/3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			30 minutes 35-45 minutes	School
Northern Ireland	Min 3 hours/day to age 8 Min 4.5 hours/day, age 8+	9am-3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Scotland	Average 25 hours/week at primary Average 27.5 hours/week at secondary	9am-3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Wales	Min 21 hours, age 5-7 Min 23.5 hours, age 7-11 Min 25 hours, age 11-16	9am-3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
France	26 hours/week, age 6 to 11 26 to 30 hrs/week, age 11 to 15 30 to 40 hrs/week, age 15 to 18		•	•	•	•	•	•		55 minutes/1 hour	Local
Germany	19 to 29 periods/ week primary 28 to 30 periods/week, age 10 to 12 30 to 32 periods/week, age 12 to 16	7:30am-1:30pm	•	•	•	•	•	•		45 minutes	School
Hungary	Max 20 hrs/week, age 6 to 9 Max 22.5 hrs/week, age 9 to 12 Max 25 hrs/week, age 12 to 14 Max 27.5 hrs/week, age 14 to 16 Max 30 hrs/week, age 16 +	8am-2pm	•	•	•	•	•			45 minutes	State
Italy	Min 27 hrs/week primary education Min 29 hrs/week lower secondary Min 29 hrs/week upper secondary	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	•		1 hour	School
Netherlands	Min 3520 hrs/year, ages 4-8 Min 3760 hrs/year, ages 8-12	9am-3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•			50-60 minutes	School
Spain	Average 25 hrs/week at primary level Average 30 hrs/week at secondary	9am-4:30/5pm	•	•	•	•	•			55 minutes 60 minutes	School
Sweden	Max 6 hrs/day up to age 9 Max 8 hrs/day aged 9+	Varies	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Switzerland	Varies	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	•		Varies	School

Continued

• Australia	Average 25 hrs/week at primary level Average 27.5 hrs/week at second level	9am -3pm	•	•	•	•	•	Varies	School
• Canada	950 hrs/year (Alberta)	9am-3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•		School
Japan	Min 17 to 20 hours/week		•	•	•	•	•		Local
Korea	830 to 1156 hours/year	8am-4:00pm	•	•	•	•	•	40-45 minutes	State
New Zealand	Average 25 hrs/week	9am-3/3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•		School
Singapore		7:30am-1pm 1pm-6:30pm	•	•	•	•	•	30-40 minutes	State
• South Africa	22.5 hrs/week, age 5-8 25 hrs/week, age 8-9 26.5hrs/week, age 9-12 26 hrs/week, age 12-13 27.5 hrs/week, age 13-15 27.5 hrs/week, age 15-18	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	Varies	School
• USA	Varies	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	Varies	School

Notes

Ireland	Children in junior infants and senior infants classes in primary school (aged 4-6) normally have a shorter school day, ending between 1.30 and 2.30 p.m. Teaching periods last for 30 minutes at primary level and 35-45 minutes at secondary.
France	Schools are usually open six days a week (Monday-Saturday), but no classes are held on Wednesdays or on Saturday afternoons. Some schools have moved to a four day week, with teaching on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The missing hours are usually made up by shortening the school holidays. Since the beginning of the 2008/09 school year, the primary school week has been reduced by two hours (from 26 to 24 hours) and there is no more teaching on Saturdays.
Germany	<p>A teaching period generally lasts 45 minutes.</p> <p>The half-day school (mornings only, five or six days a week) is the traditional form of teaching in Germany. Until recently, all-day schools (Ganztagsschulen) were the exception and most Länder did not plan any extensive expansion of this school form. However, in a bid to raise standards nationwide, government funding has been provided to set up more all-day schools.</p>
Hungary	The daily timetable must be based on the statutory average lesson time of 45 minutes. However schools may organise longer or shorter lessons. The school day generally runs between 8am and 2 pm but there may also be non-compulsory afternoon sessions. There are some all-day schools in which lessons finish around 4pm.
Italy	The school day varies dependent on whether the school has a five- or six-day week; schools with a six-day week are open from 8:30am to 1:30pm; those operating a five-day week have timetables running from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Teaching periods are an hour long for students at the lower secondary level, age 11-14. Individual schools may organise optional teaching activities and other optional activities which may raise the school week to 40 hours.
Spain	At primary level (6- to 12-year-olds), the sessions are usually three hours in the morning, two hours in the afternoon, with a two-hour break for lunch. In secondary education, days generally end earlier as there is a single session running throughout the morning and early afternoon, with two short breaks.
Switzerland	In some cantons, children have all day Saturday free, whilst in others they have lessons on Saturday mornings, but one afternoon in the week free, or lessons on Saturday mornings and one full day in the week free.
Japan	The school week has been reduced from six to five days.
Korea	The school week coincides with the six-day week in the business and government sectors; five full days Monday - Friday and Saturday morning. However, if the latter sectors adopt a five-working-day policy, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) may then consider reducing school days from six to five per week.
Singapore	Most schools run double sessions, with different groups of students attending school either from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or from 1:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday. There are plans for all schools to become single session schools by 2016.

Sources/Further information

For further information about the contents of these tables, see the following sections and their subsections of the full archive:

Table 15.1 Organisation of the school year

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19) ⇒ 3.2.x.2 Length of school year (in days) and day (in hours)

Table 15.2 Organisation of the school week and day

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19) ⇒ 3.2.x.2 Length of school year (in days) and day (in hours)