



Students at Eton, an elite English public school.

BRITAIN 	
AGE	INSTITUTION
18-21	University qualification: degree
16-18	Sixth form qualification: A-level
11-16	Secondary school qualification: GCSE
5-11	Primary school

UNITED STATES 	
AGE	INSTITUTION
18-21	University, college qualification: degree
15-18	Senior high school qualification: High School Diploma
12-15	Junior high school
6-12	Elementary school

Notes

- In Britain education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16; in the USA the years of compulsory education vary from state to state but are usually from 6 to 16. Between the ages of 3 and 5 many children attend a nursery school.
- In the USA each year of school is called a "grade". Usually elementary school covers grades 1-6, high school grades 7-12, although there is a lot of variety in the structure of high schools. In Britain the sixth form may be a separate institution or it may be part of a secondary school.
- Other institutions provide¹ general educational courses and professional training for students over the age of 16 (colleges of further education in Britain, technical training institutions and community colleges in the USA).

THE SCHOOL DAY

The normal school day starts at about 8.30 a.m. (often earlier in the USA, a little later in Britain) and lessons finish at 3.30 - 4.00 p.m. Children usually have lunch in the school canteen⁴ or bring sandwiches. Most schools are closed on Saturdays. Sports activities play a very important role in school life. Most secondary schools have gymnasiums⁵, playing fields⁶ and other sports facilities⁷. Sport and physical education are part of the school curriculum. Most schools also offer extracurricular⁸ activities which children are encouraged to participate in (computers, music, art, chess, drama, school newspaper etc.). In the USA the school is seen as part of the local community. Students take part in voluntary work to help local people and to collect⁹ money for the school. Local people may use the school facilities in the evenings.

Subjects

Subjects students must study

Teachers began teaching the full range of National Curriculum subjects for 14- to 16-year-olds in September 1996. Students have to study:

- English
- a modern foreign language
- mathematics
- information technology
- science
- physical education
- design & technology
- religious education.

This range of subjects is designed to prepare young people for adult life, including further study and employment.

Sex education is also taught although, as with religious education, parents can choose not to let their child study this subject.

Optional subjects

Depending on the school, students will be able to study other subjects such as:

- history • geography • art • music • Latin • business studies.



SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

In Britain the state schools are administered by the different local governments, although there is central control from the Department of Education in London. Some state schools are partly run by the Anglican and Catholic Churches.

Most secondary schools are comprehensive schools - they take all children without any entrance exam. However in a few areas the local government has decided to keep the more traditional grammar schools, which select children on the basis of their academic ability.

About 7% of children attend private schools completely outside the state system.

Some of these schools, for example Eton and Harrow, have a long history, and are very exclusive and expensive. Although private, they are known as "public schools".

In the USA education is the responsibility of the individual states, not the central government, and there is a great deal² of variation around the country in the structure of the system, the subjects taught, the amount of money provided and the salaries of teachers.

Within each state there are local school districts which administer, and partly pay for, the local schools and thus have great influence on them.

About 12% of children attend private schools, many of them run³ by religious organizations.

THE CURRICULUM

Primary and elementary schools in Britain and in the USA teach similar skills and subjects: beginning with the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and leading on to subjects such as history, geography and science. Music, art, physical education and, increasingly, computer skills are also important.

In Britain, with the National Curriculum, all secondary school pupils under 16 are now obliged to study: mathematics, science, English, a modern language, physical education, design & technology and information technology. Other subjects, such as history, geography, art and music, are optional.

In the USA most high schools offer a similar range of subjects. However, at senior high school level, there are also a large number of optional courses that students can choose, everything from driving and engine repair to cooking.

Religious education is also taught in British schools (although parents can choose not to send their children to these lessons). Religious education may involve¹⁰ comparing different religions rather than instruction in Christianity. American public schools are strictly non-religious and do not have religious education. Most sixth form students in Britain only study 3-4 subjects in preparation for their A-level exam. Many people feel that the age of 16-18 is too young for such specialization.

HELP

1. forniscono
2. molta
3. gestite
4. mensa
5. palestre
6. campi sportivi
7. strutture
8. extra scolastiche
9. raccogliere
10. riguardare



EXAMINATIONS

The main school examination in Britain, the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education), is usually taken at the age of 16. A student can take the exam in as many different subjects as he/she wishes, although the usual number is between 5 and 8. The candidate is given a separate grade for each subject. The Advanced-level exam, taken at 18, functions in a similar way although the standard is higher. In most cases GCSE and A-level grades are decided on the basis of written exam papers¹¹, without interviewing the candidate or consulting the teachers. Sometimes the work that a student has done during the course may also be taken into consideration and, in foreign language exams, there is also an oral interview.

To enter university a student must normally have at least 5 passes¹² at GCSE and 2 passes at A-level. To enter many professions a minimum of 5 GCSE passes is required. GCSE and A-level exams may be taken at any age and repeated as often as a candidate wishes. Pupils at British schools take internal school exams at the end of each year. If they fail, they may be moved to a different class but they do not repeat the year. American students obtain a high school diploma by

taking, and passing, a fixed number of courses (the exact requirement varies from state to state). Grades are given in each course, A, B, C, D or F (= fail). The grades are decided on the basis of written examinations, coursework and assessment by the teachers.

UNIVERSITIES

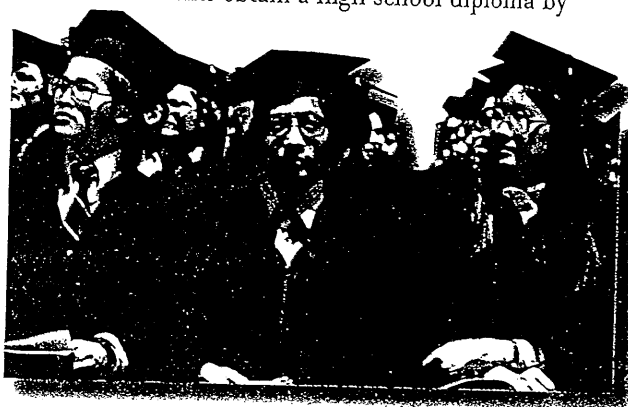
British students do not have an automatic right to a place at university. Each university selects its students based on the grades that they obtain in the A-level exam and sometimes also on an interview. Similarly in the USA, universities interview candidates and examine their high school records¹³ before offering them a place. Students are also required to take national standardized tests which measure abilities in English and mathematics as well as general knowledge.

Some universities with famous names and a lot of prestige (e.g. Harvard and Yale in the USA, Oxford and Cambridge in Britain) attract more applicants¹⁴ and are therefore more difficult to enter than others.

There is a tradition of students leaving home and going to live in the university during the course of their studies. Universities offer a rich social life, with a variety of clubs and societies and communal halls of residence¹⁵. Students can get financial support from the government, usually in the form of loans¹⁶, or sometimes from the university through bursaries¹⁷.

The majority of students complete their courses within the 3-4 year period scheduled. The number who "drop out" is comparatively low.

Students at Berkeley on graduation day.



HELP

11. esami scritti 12. sufficienze
13. documenti: registri, pagelle 14. candidati
15. residenze per studenti 16. prestiti 17. borse di studio



COMPREHENSION

Word field

EDUCATION

assessment	giudizio, valutazione	degree	laurea	high school	scuola secondaria (USA)	rule	regola
attend	frequentare	drop out	abbandonare gli studi	institution	istituzione	scholarship	borsa di studio
bring up	educare	educate	istruire	interview	colloquio	score	voto
career	carriera	elementary school	scuola elementare (USA)	level	livello	select	selezionare
co-educational school	scuola mista	entrance exam	esame d'ammissione	method	metodo	sixth form	classi negli ultimi due anni della scuola secondaria (GB)
college	università (USA)	expel	espellere	mixed ability class	classe con studenti di livelli diversi di abilità	skill	abilità
competition	competizione	fail	non superare (un esame)	nursery school	scuola materna	standard	grado, livello
comprehensive school	scuola secondaria onnicomprensiva (GB)	fees	tasse	optional	facoltativo	subject	materia
compulsory course	obbligatorio corso	grade	voto; anno di corso (USA)	pass	superare (un esame)	syllabus	programma di studio
curriculum	corso, programma di studi	grammar school	scuola secondaria con selezione degli studenti (GB)	primary school	scuola elementare (GB)	vocational training	formazione professionale
				qualification	qualifica, requisito		

