



Choosing a career-based training course

If you know what career you want to do you can almost certainly be trained to do it and provided with the practical and academic qualifications you need in the United Kingdom (UK). Practical courses, based on the skills you need, are offered by further education colleges, higher education institutions, learning providers and independent colleges. You can choose whether to improve your existing work skills or get a qualification useful to your current or future career. Qualifications range from very basic to university level. You can do almost anything at a UK institution, from agriculture to office skills.

Checklist: Why study a career-based training course in the United Kingdom?

- The UK is a safe and stable country in which to live and study.
- UK institutions teach courses that will lead you to internationally recognised qualifications.
- Choosing to study in the UK will also bring you into constant contact with English, the language of international business, commerce and technology and many institutions help students who need to develop their language skills.
- Further education institutions, where many career-based training courses are run, are known for their friendly and caring environment – many of these are state-funded, and therefore charge lower fees than independent institutions, without compromising the quality of tuition.

A great advantage of further education institutions is the all-round diversity they offer. Students are of all ages and will be studying for many different reasons. In state institutions, most students are from the UK. In independent institutions, there are more students from other countries and classes are smaller, the courses often being designed around the students themselves.

1 What can I study?

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

A wide range of vocational qualifications are accredited in the National Qualifications Framework. They cover most industry sectors and span all levels of the framework.



There is not one qualification framework that covers the entire UK. In this sheet we will look at the Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) framework for England and the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) framework for Scotland. These frameworks are useful as they show the general level of the qualifications and also suggest progression routes from one qualification to another.

Following a review in 2003 the NQF has been revised and the new framework will be implemented from September 2004. The main change is that the number of levels in the NQF will be increased to nine (entry level to level 8). For more information see www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/

Currently, the framework spans five levels as seen in the table below.

Level of qualification	General	Vocationally related	Occupational
5	Higher-level qualifications (e.g. HNC, HND, Foundation Degree)		Level 5 NVQ
4			Level 4 NVQ
3 – advanced	A-levels and AVCE	Vocational qualifications	Level 3 NVQ
2 – intermediate	GCSE (grades A-C)		Level 2 NVQ
1 – foundation	GCSE (grades D-G)		Level 1 NVQ
Entry level	Certificate of Achievement		

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The SCQF brings together all Scottish qualifications into a single framework of twelve levels. This enables both students and employers to understand how those qualifications relate to each other and makes clear the routes of progression from one level to the next.

The SCQF also assists in making clear the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby clarifying opportunities for international progression routes. For more information see www.scqf.org.uk

SCQF levels	SQA National Units, courses and group awards	Higher Education (HE) qualifications	SVQs
12		Doctorate	
11		Master's degree	SVQ 5
10		First degree (Honours)	
9		First degree (Ordinary)	
8		Higher National Diploma (HND) Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate (HNC) Certificate of Higher Education	
6	Higher		SVQ 3



5	Intermediate 2/ Credit standard grade		SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1/ General standard grade		SVQ 1
3	Access 3/ Foundation standard grade		
2	Access 2/		
1	Access 1/		

It may be possible to take the exams for some of the qualifications listed here at your local British Council office. Contact your local office for more information or go to www.britishcouncil.org/learning-exams.htm

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

England, Wales and Northern Ireland	
GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications)	<p>General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at two levels: foundation and intermediate. The advanced level GNVQ has been replaced by the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education. (AVCE).</p> <p>GNVQs will be replaced by GCSEs in vocational subjects- the final year for GNVQ certification will be 2005/2006.</p> <p>For more information see: www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/608.html</p>
Vocational GCSEs (Vocational General Certificate of Secondary Education) www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications/	<p>GCSEs in vocational subjects offer people the opportunity to gain general knowledge by studying a vocational course at this level alongside the traditional curriculum, helping them understand the world of work.</p> <p>GCSEs in vocational subjects are available in 7 subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and Design • Applied Business • Engineering Health and Social Care • Applied Information and Communication Technology (ITC) • Leisure and Tourism • Manufacturing • Applied Science. <p>This subject list will be extended in the future.</p> <p>The new qualifications will use the A*-G grading system as in ordinary GCSEs</p> <p>They consist of three units and are equivalent to GCSEs</p>
BTEC First Certificate/Diploma www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications/	<p>The First Diploma is a starter qualification, equivalent to a GNVQ Intermediate. It can lead to A-Level study or to a National Diploma course.</p> <p>Courses are usually: Certificate – 1 year part-time Diploma – 2 years part-time, 1 year full-time</p>



England, Wales and Northern Ireland	
<p>OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)</p> <p>www.ocr.org.uk</p>	<p>Provides a flexible range of qualifications, many of which fit into the National Qualification Framework.</p> <p>Subjects include; management, business, information technology, languages, retail, finance and office skills.</p>
<p>City and Guilds</p> <p>www.city-and-guilds.co.uk</p>	<p>City and Guilds is an assessment and certification body which offers a broad range of over 500 work related qualifications.</p> <p>Courses leading to C&G qualifications are run in approved centres, which include schools, institutions of further education, training organisations and adult education institutions.</p> <p>The duration of courses varies according to the type of qualification and the way in which individual centres operate.</p>
<p>London Chamber of Commerce in Industry (LCCIEB)</p> <p>www.lccieb.com</p>	<p>LCCIEB is a provider of business related vocational qualifications (including NVQs).</p> <p>They offer varying levels in different subjects so that students can enter at the level that suits them.</p> <p>Subjects covered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance ● Business English ● International language ● Teaching ● Marketing ● IT ● Travel and tourism ● Secretarial ● General business ● Entry level qualifications ● Group Awards and Diplomas Travel and tourism ● Secretarial ● General business ● Entry level qualifications ● Group Awards and Diplomas
<p>BTEC National Certificate/Diploma</p> <p>www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications/</p>	<p>The BTEC National Diploma is equivalent to an AVCE (Advance vocational certificate of Education Vocational A-level) can be used for entry to an Higher National Diploma or first degree course.</p> <p>Courses usually take: Certificate – two years part-time, one year full-time Diploma – three years part-time, two years full-time</p>



England, Wales and Northern Ireland	
<p>AVCE</p> <p>(Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education)</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications/</p>	<p>AVCES are available in a broad range of vocational areas.</p> <p>AVCEs emphasise knowledge, skills and understanding in broad vocational areas; they involve students in information gathering, assignment writing and working as part of a team. Students who have successfully completed the qualification will have acquired practical skills which will serve them well in work related areas.</p> <p>They are available in twelve-, six- and three-unit awards. The twelve-unit awards, also called 'double awards', are equivalent to two A-levels; the six-unit awards are equivalent to one A-level; the three-unit awards are equivalent to one AS-level</p> <p>Vocational A-levels are recognised for entry to undergraduate study</p> <p>Vocational A levels (AVCE's) can be studied in the following subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Design • Business • Construction and the Built Environment • Engineering • Health and Social Care • Hospitality & Catering • ICT • Leisure and Recreation • Manufacturing • Media (Communication and Production) • Performing Arts • Retail and Distributive Services (six-unit only) • Science • Travel and Tourism. <p>The 3-unit qualification is available in four subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Engineering • Health and Social Care • ICT.
<p>Foundation, Access and Bridging courses</p> <p>www.ucas.com/access</p>	<p>These courses are routes into higher education or vocational training for those without traditional qualifications. They are designed to meet university entrance criteria in a wide range of subjects and may include English support.</p> <p>Entrance requirements are flexible but the student must be over 17 and have obtained high school matriculation.</p> <p>Courses normally last 1-2 years but can be shorter. They are taught at independent schools and tutorial colleges, institutions of further and higher education, universities and local colleges (working in partnership)</p>
<p>Higher National Certificate/Diploma</p> <p>www.edexcel.org.uk/qualifications/</p>	<p>BTEC Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Higher National Certificates (HNCs) are level 4 qualifications designed to equip students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for success in current or future employment or for progression to an undergraduate degree.</p> <p>The HND is equivalent to two years of undergraduate study and in many cases can be used to progress into the third year of a degree. Holders of the HNC may progress into the second year of a degree. (This should be checked with the individual institutions)</p> <p>Courses usually take;</p> <p>Certificate – two years part-time</p> <p>Diploma – three years part-time, two years full-time</p>
<p>Foundation Degree</p> <p>www.ucas.com www.foundationdegree.org.uk</p>	<p>Foundation degree are employment related higher education qualifications designed to prepare students for work in particular sectors of business or industry. They are likely to include work placements as academic study.</p> <p>Two years full-time or part-time over a longer period.</p> <p>After completion students can progress to an honours degree with a further 12-15 months of study.</p>

Scotland

Scotland	
<p>National Qualifications</p>	<p>These are available at a range of levels and are taught in schools, colleges and other learning centres. Subjects covered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting and Finance • Administration • Business Management • Engineering • Hospitality • Hairdressing and Beauty <p>National Qualifications are based on National Units (40 hour units of study) and National Courses such as Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Highers and Advanced Highers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF Levels 4 and 5) Generally used for progression to Highers. For entry to higher education these qualifications are treated as equivalent to standard grades and are normally accepted as back-up to Highers. • Highers (SCQF Level 6) Scottish higher education institutions normally make their offers in terms of numbers and grades of Higher passes. • Advanced Highers (SCQF Level 7) For entry to certain degree programmes some higher education institutions allow the holders of Advanced Highers to bypass specific first year courses. (Check details with specific institution). <p>National Qualifications develop the five core skills – Communication, Numeracy, Information Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others.</p>
<p>Scottish Group Awards (SGAs)</p> <p>www.sqa.org.uk</p>	<p>SGAs are larger qualifications that you take over a period of time. They are made up of National Courses, National Units and core skills. You work towards them by taking four or five subjects which relate to the occupation or higher education course that you want to enter.</p> <p>They are available at SCQF levels 2 to 7 so that students can enter at the level appropriate to their qualifications and experience.</p> <p>Subjects covered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and Design • Business • Care • Engineering • Technology • Computing and Information Technology
<p>Higher National Certificate/Diploma</p> <p>(SCQF Levels 7 and 8)</p>	<p>Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Higher National Certificates (HNCs) are qualifications designed to equip students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for success in current or future employment or for progression to an undergraduate degree.</p> <p>The HND is equivalent to two years of undergraduate study. In Scotland there are long - standing arrangements which allow HND students to progress into the third year of a degree. Holders of the HNC may progress into the second year of a degree. (This should be checked with the individual institutions).</p> <p>Many courses are on offer in popular areas like Business Administration, Information and Office Management, Travel and Tourism, and Engineering as well as in Broadcasting, Agriculture, Computing and Craft subjects.</p>



Scotland	
	<p>Courses usually take; Certificate- two years part-time, one year full-time Diploma- two years part-time, three years full-time</p>
<p>SVQ (Scottish Vocational Qualification) (comparable to NVQ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) www.sqa.org.uk/</p>	<p>Scottish Vocational Qualifications are occupational qualifications related to a specific job and are based on the knowledge and skills needed in that job. The usual pattern is for the student to start in a job and then study part-time for the SVQ related to that job.</p> <p>Because they are usually only offered part-time and because of the need to acquire appropriate work experience, SVQs are not usually an option for non-EEA students who are not permitted to study part-time under UK visa regulations.</p> <p>However, in some cases they may be part of a full-time programme of study.</p> <p>SVQs range from Level 1 (routine work) to Level 5 (senior management). SVQ level 3 and 4 may be used for entry to higher education.</p>
<p>Foundation, Access and Bridging courses</p>	<p>These courses are routes into higher education or vocational training for those without traditional qualifications. They are designed to meet university entrance criteria in a wide range of subjects and may include English support.</p> <p>Entrance requirements are flexible but the student must be over 17 and have obtained high school matriculation.</p> <p>Courses normally last 1-2 years but can be shorter. They are taught at independent schools and tutorial colleges, institutions of further and higher education, universities and local colleges (working in partnership).</p> <p>International Foundation Programme Scotland (IFPS) (www.studyinScotland.co.uk)</p> <p>IFPS offers nine, twelve and fifteen month foundation programmes. These are for international students who need preparation for undergraduate study.</p>
<p>Professional Development Awards (PDAs) www.sqa.org.uk/</p>	<p>PDA Certificates, Advanced Certificates, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas are post - experience awards spanning a wide range of occupational areas. For entry to higher education they are usually considered alongside the experience and other qualifications held by the student.</p>



Checklist: Choosing the right course

- 1 You should find out from professional bodies in your own country which qualification will be most useful in your future career
- 2 Carry out thorough research into the programmes available – the British Council website, www.educationuk.org, is a good starting point
- 3 Obtain the institution's prospectus
- 4 Consider whether the college is in the sort of place where you would like to live (i.e. town or city, rural or urban), its accessibility and whether you will be close to any relatives.

2 Entrance

Is it difficult to get on to a career-based training course?

No. There will be minimum academic standards for some courses, but there is not the same competition for places as for some degree courses. There is a vast choice of courses and institutions. A basic level of English will be required. Some institutions may insist on a certain standard such as obtaining bands 5.5–6.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Will I be able to move on to a United Kingdom university after my course?

Career-based qualifications are recognised nationally in the UK and will be accepted by universities. As a general rule you will need to apply to a degree course that is in the same broad subject area as your qualification.

You apply for a degree course through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). An AVCE/Vocational A-level or an BTEC National Diploma is often enough to gain you entry to a university degree course. Scottish Universities' entrance requirements are normally stated in terms of Highers or a group of Advanced Highers. A Scottish Higher National Certificate (HNC) may allow you to enter the second year of a degree course. A Higher National Diploma may allow you to enter the third year of a degree course (you should check with individual universities for specific advice). For more information, refer to *Applications* and *Choosing your degree course and institution* in this series.

Will I be able to live at the institution?

Some institutions have halls of residence or study bedrooms for all their students. If they do not, they usually organise lodgings or home-stays for them. For more information, refer to *Tuition fees and the cost of living* in this series.

3 How can I register as a professional?

There are professional bodies covering all trades and professions. To join a professional body, you usually need to have a certain level of qualification or sometimes to sit a specific examination. A few professions, such as architecture, medicine and the law, may only be practised by people who have obtained the necessary qualifications. Institutions that teach related subjects will know which qualifications are needed to register.

It is important that you check what level of qualification you need to do the job in the country where you want to work and also whether you need to belong to a professional body. It is also important that you check whether the UK vocational qualification that you have chosen is recognised in the country where you want to work.



4 Next steps

Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 Your first decision is what type of course you need.
- 2 Find out which institutions offer your subject. A good source of information is the British Council's Guide to UK Education, which lists institutions and courses by type and provides information on entrance requirements for career-based qualifications. Copies should be available for you to consult at your local British Council office.
- 3 Look on the British Council website www.educationuk.org for more detailed information and links to institutions' websites.
- 4 Obtain a copy of the prospectus from those institutions that interest you.
- 5 Make your application. Contact the institution you have chosen direct and ask for an application form. For HNDs/HNCs and Foundation Degrees, contact the institution and ask if you need to apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

5 Where can I find more information?

British Council Education information

Website www.educationuk.org

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

EducationUK Scotland

Website www.educationukscotland.org

Wales International Consortium

Website www.walesinternationalconsortium.com

Foundation Degrees

Website www.foundationdegree.org.uk

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7509 5556
Fax +44 (0) 20 7509 6666
Email info@qca.org.uk
Website www.qca.org.uk

City and Guilds

1 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DD
Telephone +44 (0) 20 7294 2800
Fax +44 (0) 20 7294 2400
Email enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk
Website www.city-and-guilds.co.uk

Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)

1 Regent Street
Cambridge CB2 1GG
Telephone +44 (0) 12 2355 2552
Fax +44 (0) 12 2355 2553
Email helpdesk@ocr.org.uk

Website www.ocr.org.uk

International Foundation Programme Scotland

77 Southpark Avenue
Glasgow G12 8LE
Telephone +44 (0) 14 1357 0123

Fax +44 (0) 14 1357 0199

Email m.bissland@ifps.ac

Website www.studyinScotland.co.uk

Other useful resources

British Qualifications 34th ed. (Kogan Page, 2004, ISBN 0 7494 4138 0) – provides information on all the different vocational qualifications on offer in the UK.

Directory of Vocational and Further Education 2004/2005 (Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2004, ISBN 0 273 68833 2) – provides details of all further education colleges and a range of institutions from agricultural colleges to performing arts colleges.

Guide to Education @ 16 2004/2005 (Peridot Press, 2004, ISBN 0 901 57798 7) – details over 1,750 schools and colleges throughout the UK. It contains helpful articles covering important aspects of post-16 education.

Occupations 2004 (DfES, 2003, ISBN 0 86110864 7) an in-depth guide of over 600 career choices of all types from unskilled to professional work, also list prospects and qualification for each occupation.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Hanover House
24 Douglas Street
Glasgow G2 7NQ
Telephone +44 (0) 845 279 1000
Fax +44 (0) 141 242 2244
Email customer@sqa.org.uk
Website www.sqa.org.uk

(Also the **Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework** at www.scqf.org.uk)

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ

Telephone 870 1122 211

Fax +44 (0) 124 2544 961

Email enquiries@ucas.ac.uk

Website www.ucas.com

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCIEB)

LCCIEB Corporate Headquarters
112 Station Road
Sidcup
Kent DA15 7BJ
Telephone +44 (0) 20 8309 3000
Fax +44 (0) 210 8302 4169
Email custserv@lccieb.org.uk
Website www.lccieb.com

(Organisation has offices around the world- check the website)

Edexcel Foundation

Stewart House
32 Russell Square
London WC1B 5DN

Telephone +44 (0) 87 0240 9800

Fax +44 (0) 20 7758 6960

Email enquiries@edexcel.org.uk

Website www.edexcel.org.uk



NB. Please note these books may not be available at your local British Council office.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

June 2004

© British Council 2004

The United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

We are registered in England as a charity.