

Learning Languages

If you choose to study languages in the United Kingdom (UK), you will find a wealth of courses and a wide range of levels at which to study. You can take pure languages or a language in combination with, for example, business studies or a science subject. It should be noted that you will need to have a good understanding of the rules of grammar to learn another language. If you are interested in learning English please refer to Learn English in the United Kingdom in this series; if you are interested in teaching English please refer to Study English language teaching in this series.

Checklist: Why study languages in the United Kingdom?

- most UK language courses incorporate a year in the country whose language you are studying
- the UK is one of thirty countries participating in the Socrates/Erasmus scheme, which makes it easier for students from UK institutions to study abroad as part of their course
- you can often work as a language assistant in the country whose language you are studying
- your UK qualifications carry prestige all over the world
- you can combine language study with a teaching qualification – you could even qualify in the UK to teach your own language
- UK universities and colleges have a long tradition of welcoming international students.

1 What can I study?

Type of study	Examples of subjects	Where you could study
A/AS-levels/ Scottish Highers	Most European and some international languages. Asian languages, Latin, and Ancient Greek are also available but at far fewer institutions.	Secondary schools always offer modern languages, but the number and choice varies. You would need to look at individual schools' prospectuses (refer to <i>Choosing your boarding school</i> and <i>Choosing a state-funded school</i> in this series). Some schools have been designated as specialist language colleges by the government; they provide a broad curriculum but specialise in the teaching of languages.
Access courses	<p>An access course is a one year course designed to prepare you for entry to a degree course at a university. Many access courses focus on a particular subject and prepare you for a degree in that subject. There are access courses in modern languages. Access courses can be very intensive and you must be prepared to study grammar.</p> <p>Scotland has its own one year programme, the Scottish International Foundation Programme. This includes an intensive English language training course which is recognised within Scotland as an alternative to IELTS or TOEFL qualifications. There is a final examination.</p>	Sixth-form colleges, tutorial colleges, colleges of further education, colleges of higher education and universities run courses. Some courses are specially designed for international students, to bridge the gap between the qualifications you have and those you need. Go to www.ucas.com/access/index.html or refer to <i>Choosing your access course and institution</i> in this series.
First degrees Eg. BA, BSc	<p>There is a vast range of courses on offer: not only modern European languages such as French, German, Spanish and Italian, but Bulgarian, Finnish, Gujarati, Korean, Japanese and Polish (these are just a few examples of the many languages available).</p> <p>You can also study a language in combination with another subject, such as economics, business studies, history, management or politics, this requires a great deal of study time.</p>	<p>Universities and colleges of higher education. Courses are listed on www.educationuk.org, and you can search by subject and by where you would like to study.</p> <p>Universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland usually offer four year degrees (with one year abroad). In Scotland, languages degrees may be (but are not always) five years, including a year abroad.</p>
First degrees for beginners	<p>There are degrees available for students who are total beginners in the language they wish to study (they would probably be asked for a qualification in another language, e.g Latin with beginners Ancient Greek)</p> <p>Some other degree courses will also accept you if you are a total beginner.</p>	Universities and colleges of higher education. Go to www.educationuk.org , and search under 'beginners' – you will see the beginners courses listed.
Postgraduate degrees	You can take postgraduate degrees (Master's and doctorates) in many languages.	Universities and colleges of higher education. Search www.educationuk.org , under 'postgraduate'.

Type of study	Examples of subjects	Where you could study
Degrees for teaching languages	You can combine learning a language with learning to teach – many languages are available, and courses often offer two modern languages.	Universities and colleges of higher education – go to www.ucas.com and search under the language you wish to study, then look for ‘... and teaching’. You may also find the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) web site useful, www.useyourheadteach.gov.uk
Distance study	A wide range of courses are available for self-study. Self-discipline is required and you will have to study for at least 15 minutes to half an hour every day.	Look for courses on www.educationuk.org and refer to <i>Distance Learning</i> in this series.
Part-time courses	Most subjects (especially the more commonly studied languages) can be studied part-time.	Universities and colleges of higher education. Look for courses on www.educationuk.org .
Short courses/ summer courses	There are a variety of short courses available.	Independent colleges sometimes offer these – search www.hotcourses.com under ‘short courses’. Look also at www.floodlight.co.uk for courses in Greater London.

Checklist: Choosing the right course

- think about what sort of town or city you would like to live in – there are so many options for studying languages in the UK that you have a choice about your lifestyle
- check whether you need a certain level of proficiency in English – some institutions ask for this
- if you want to teach your studied language in your own country or another, you should check whether British teacher training is recognised there
- be aware that some Scottish universities’ language degrees may last five years instead of the usual four for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- be aware that you must have a good knowledge of grammar, and the ability to apply yourself for at least half an hour a day. Learning a language is not like studying other disciplines.



2 Entrance

Entrance for language courses is flexible, though most language degrees ask for an A/AS-level/Scottish Higher or equivalent in a language (not necessarily the one you intend to study). The grades asked for entrance to degree courses will depend very much on the institution. Popular institutions (and highly selective ones, such as Oxford and Cambridge) will ask for very good grades at A-level/Scottish Highers or equivalent. Even if you are a native speaker of the language you wish to study, you will still need to meet the entrance requirements.

3 How can I register as a professional?

This only applies if you want to teach in the UK. Your degree – even if it is a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree – can only recommend you for qualified teacher status (QTS). You would have to do a year's probationary teaching and tests in literacy, numeracy and ICT before being allowed to teach in the UK.

For more information refer to *Teaching and education* in this series. Advice is also available on the Teacher Training Agency web site www.useyourheadteach.gov.uk

Would a United Kingdom qualification be recognised in other countries?

Your qualifications in this field should be recognised all over the world. However, if you want to teach in a particular country, you should always check first with the government education department in that country to confirm that they recognise the qualification you are intending to pursue.

Socrates/Erasmus

This agreement gives mobility between thirty countries – the twenty-five member states of the European Union (EU); three European Economic Area (EEA) countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway); and two associated countries (Bulgaria and Romania).

Students in higher education may spend a study period (from three to twelve months) in another participating country. They generally receive a grant to help offset the 'mobility costs' of studying in another country, such as travel, language preparation and differences in the cost of living.

Socrates/Erasmus also supports the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a system of academic credit allocation and transfer which has been developed experimentally by 145 universities in EU member states and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and is now being implemented by more than 1,000 institutions.

This system facilitates the recognition of periods of study abroad (but not of the final degree) for Erasmus students. It is now widely adopted across Europe also as a basis for a credit system for every student.

For more information refer to www2.britishcouncil.org/socrates and www.erasmus.ac.uk.

4 Next Steps

Checklist: Your next steps

- 1 For an objective view of the teaching standards in individual departments at universities and colleges, look up the Teaching Quality Assessment report on www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/reviewreports.htm. (See *Quality Issues* in this series for further information.)
- 2 If you wish to take a postgraduate course, you can compare research departments by looking up research assessment exercise results on www.hero.ac.uk/rae/index.htm (See *Quality Issues* in this series for further information.)
- 3 After your preliminary searches, always obtain the prospectuses of institutions that interest you.



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

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Telephone +44 (0) 870 000 2288

Fax +44 (0) 1928 794 248

Email info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Website www.dfes.gov.uk

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0) 870 1122211

Fax +44 (0) 1242 544961

Email enquiries@ucas.ac.uk

Website www.ucas.com

Training and Development Agency for Schools

151 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9SZ

Telephone +0845 6000 991 (For English speakers)

+0845 6000 992 (For Welsh speakers)

Teaching Information Line +44 0845 6000 991

Email tdapublications@omsg.co.uk

Website <http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit.aspx>

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