

British Schools Educational Levels

An Explanation Of British Schools Educational Levels

Name	Equivalent	Age Range	Education Level
Nursery or Play School	Kindergarten	Up to 5 years	Pre-School
Infant School		5 – 7 years	Primary
Junior School		7 – 11 years	Primary
Secondary School		11 – 16 years	Secondary
Sixth-Form or College		16 – 18 years	Tertiary (academic)
College		16 years +	Vocational
University or College		18 years + depending on length of course	Higher

Sixth-forms within schools, and sixth-form colleges, teach academic subjects usually geared towards “A-Level” qualifications. Other colleges may offer a mix of academic and vocational courses. The vocational courses usually result in a qualification recognised by a trade body or association and may be in subjects such as vehicle maintenance or repair; construction trades such as carpentry, bricklaying, electrical installation, plumbing etc. However, some vocational courses provide qualifications that may contribute towards entry for higher education. Some colleges also offer degree course. (It’s never simple).

Americans may wonder about the terms "O-level" and "A-level"

An "O-level" was an exam at the "Ordinary" level, usually taken at the age of 16, sometimes used as a qualification for obtaining employment working in a shop or a factory.

The “O-Levels” could also be used as admission qualifications to a college or "sixth-form" school, if the secondary school where the “O-Levels” were taken did not have its own sixth-form.

However, the above no longer applies. The “O-Level” was replaced by the G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in 1986.

Sixth-forms or colleges are where one would study and take examinations at "A-level" (Advanced Level). Passes at “A-Level” would qualify a student for entrance to higher education (university or similar), or a better job.

At the time of writing (March 2008) the whole system of G.C.S.E. and “A-Level” examinations is under review, and will almost certainly be changed in the near future.

See http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_6210.aspx for a full explanation, and history of the various exams since 1951.

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