

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Ireland** Statutory assessment arrangements for children at the end of key stages 1-3 (aged 4-14) have recently been replaced by annual teacher assessment.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

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Wales

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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.