

Table 8

Curriculum structure and organisation

	Status of Curriculum	Curriculum specification	Time allocation	Age at which elective subjects are selected	End of lower secondary qualification
England	Statutory curriculum framework	Statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for local adaptation	Recommended minimum weekly time allocation by phase of education. Local flexibility in allocation	14+	Evaluation of students at the end of compulsory education (age 16) is normally by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination.
Ireland	Statutory curriculum framework (non-statutory pre-school curriculum framework)	National Core Curriculum framework for local adaptation	Recommended minimum weekly time allocation by subject and phase of education	12	<i>Junior Certificate</i>
Northern Ireland	Statutory curriculum framework	Curriculum expressed through six 'areas of learning', cross-curricular themes and other skills (thinking skills and personal capabilities)	Local time allocation	14 for choices with the 'learning entitlement'. Schools may offer electives from age 11.	Evaluation of students at the end of compulsory education (age 16) is normally by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination.
Scotland	Non-statutory national guidance	The 'experiences and outcomes' for learning organised across eight curriculum areas	Local time allocation	Age 12 or 14	Standard Grade
Wales	Statutory curriculum framework	National curriculum and religious education	Local time allocation	14+	Evaluation of students at the end of compulsory education (age 16) is normally by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination.
France	Statutory curriculum framework	Statutory common core of knowledge and skills expressed as national programmes (of study)	Statutory minimum weekly time allocation by subject and phase/section of education. Local flexibility in allocation for some subjects	12	<i>Diplôme national du brevet</i> at age 15
• Germany	No national curriculum. Responsibility lies with the individual federal states (<i>Länder</i>)	Common national educational standards have begun to be developed for specific stages in primary and secondary education. Each <i>Land</i> produces curriculum guidelines on the goals, subject matter and methods involved in learning.	Statutory weekly time allocation by phase of education (and, at secondary level, by the distinction of whether a subject is compulsory or optional).	12/13	A 'Leaving Certificate' on completion of Year 9 (<i>Hauptschulabschluss</i>) or Year 10 (<i>mittlerer Schulabschluss</i>) of compulsory education.

	Status of Curriculum	Curriculum specification	Time allocation	Age at which elective subjects are selected	End of lower secondary qualification
Hungary	Statutory curriculum framework	National Core Curriculum framework for local adaptation	Annual statutory time allocation by subject and year level	6	Optional national basic examination (age 16) (<i>alapvizsga</i>) (Upper secondary qualification at age 18 – education compulsory to age 18)
Italy	Statutory national curriculum defined through national guidelines	National guidelines establish general objectives of education process and specific learning objectives. The guidelines comprise three disciplines divided into subjects.	Local time allocation with specification for English and Catholic religion.	RE is optional throughout compulsory education. No other options are offered.	<i>Licenza media</i> at age 14
Netherlands	Statutory curriculum framework	Statutory attainment targets which schools use to devise their curricular plan	Minimum time allocation by phase of education. Local flexibility in allocation	12	Three pathways through upper secondary education lead to school leaving qualifications
Spain	Statutory curriculum	Teaching is organised around the minimum core curriculum requirements of the official curriculum (<i>enseñanzas mínimas</i>) over six 'areas of knowledge'	An example school timetable has been established by the national Ministry. It reflects the minimum core curriculum requirements (<i>enseñanzas mínimas</i>). The core curriculum requirements account for 65 per cent of the school curriculum (55 per cent in those Autonomous Communities where the regional language is also taught). The remainder is determined locally.	12	<i>Graduado en educación obligatoria</i>
Sweden	Statutory curriculum	The curriculum is set out in a syllabus for each subject.	Yes: minimum teaching times for basic education are set out	In the nine years of basic education, 13 per cent of time is set aside for pupil and school options	Final school leaving certificate (<i>grundskolabetyg</i>)
• Switzerland	No national curriculum. Responsibility lies with the individual cantons.	Cantonal education authorities draw up the curriculum for lower secondary education. There is ongoing work to 'harmonise' some aspects of compulsory phase education, including some which relate to the curriculum. Organisations such as the CIIP, which brings together the French-speaking cantons are also working on producing regional curricula.	Varies	Varies	A 'Leaving Certificate' on completion of Year 9 (<i>Hauptschulabschluss</i>) or Year 10 (<i>mittlerer Schulabschluss</i>) of compulsory education.

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• Australia	Statutory national curriculum framework (in development)	Learning entitlement expressed in terms of learning areas with general capabilities and cross-curricular perspectives. Content descriptions specify what teachers are expected to teach	Local time allocation	N/A Framework in development	State and territory external examination system at age 18/19
• Canada	No national curriculum. Responsibility lies with the individual provinces and territories. A National Secretariat (CMEC) ensures communication on curricula issues.	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies – the Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP) is a series of cyclical tests of the achievement of 13-year-old students in mathematics, reading, and science involving all provinces and territories.
Japan	Statutory curriculum framework	Courses of study provide guidelines for the objectives and standard content of each curriculum subject. Adaptation by local boards of education encouraged	Annual statutory minimum time allocation by subject and year level	12	Local end of lower secondary/upper secondary high school entry examinations (age 15)
Korea	Statutory curriculum framework	National common core curriculum; local adaptation/additional local content encouraged	Annual statutory minimum time allocation by subject and year level	6	Some local upper secondary high school entry examinations at age 15. On completion of upper secondary high school education, successful students receive the diploma of high school education.
New Zealand	Statutory curriculum framework	Framework expressed in strands including 'principles', 'values', 'key competencies', 'learning area statements' and 'achievement objectives'.	Local time allocation	Can be offered by schools from school entry, age 5/6	Level 1 National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is usually taken at this stage
Singapore	Statutory national curriculum	Statutory statement of content and subject syllabuses	Statutory weekly time allocation by subject and phase/section of education	14 +	Singapore (Cambridge) International GCE 'N' and 'O' level

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• South Africa	National curriculum	Curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) that provides details of what students should be taught grade by grade, subject by subject.	Statutory percentage of time set by subject	Age 15 when students choose options for further education and training certificate.	Successful completion/ passing of Grade 9 (age 15) results in the award of a compulsory secondary leaving certificate qualification which registers at grade 1 on the National Qualifications Framework. This is a requirement for further study. (National Senior Certificate at age 18)
• USA	No national curriculum. Responsibility lies with the individual states	Varies	Varies	Varies	State and territory external examination system at age 18/19

Notes

- **New Zealand** The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a composite qualification made up of credits gained from a wide range of subjects including traditional school curriculum areas and alternative programmes that are listed on the National Qualifications Framework. The NCEA is available at levels 1, 2 and 3. Level 1 units are generally taken in the first year of upper secondary education.

Sources/Further information

For more detailed information on the content of these tables - see the following sections and subsections of the full Archive.

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Curriculum (3-19) ⇒ Select a phase of education ⇒ 5.x.1 Control