

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 table below. Figures indicate the ages at which standardised national assessment takes place. An additional column, indicating whether standardised assessment is full cohort assessment or by sample was added in November 2010. 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	Cohort or sample	At school entry	During compulsory primary education	During compulsory secondary education
England	yes	cohort	5	7,8,9,10, 11	14
Ireland	yes	cohort	no	7, 10	
Northern Ireland	yes	cohort	no	4-11	11-14
Scotland	yes	sample	varies	8/9, 11/12	13/14
Wales	yes	cohort	4/5	7, 11	14
France	yes	sample	no	7/8, 10/11	14/15
Germany	yes	sample	6	no	14/15
Hungary	yes	cohort	6	9/10	12/14/16
Italy	yes	sample	no	7/8, 10/11	11/12, 13/14
Netherlands	yes	cohort	no	12 for most	14/15
Spain	yes	sample/cohort	no	10	14
Sweden	yes	cohort	no	9	12, 14, 16
Switzerland	no	n/a	no	no	no
Australia	yes	cohort	no	8/9 10/11	12/13 14/15
Canada	yes	varies	no	varies	varies
Japan	yes	sample	no	12	15
Korea	yes	sample	no	12	15, 16
New Zealand	yes	sample	5/6	8/9	12/13
Singapore	yes	cohort	no	10, 12	
South Africa	yes	cohort	no	8/9, 11/12,	14-15
USA	yes	varies	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) (birth to five years old). 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 seven and 11 involves teacher assessment and/or externally set national tests. At age 14, there is only teacher assessment.
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 seven), 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 have recently been replaced by annual teacher assessment. InCAS (Interactive Computerised Assessment System) are used during key stages 1 and 2 (ages four to 11) for diagnostic assessment.
Scotland	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 seven), Key Stage 2 (age 11) and at the end of Key Stage 3, age 14.
France	<p>A nursery school "record of achievement" is kept and passed on to a child's first compulsory level school. Progressive assessment of the knowledge and skills of the <i>socle commun</i> (the common core of knowledge) takes place via national standardised assessment, organised in three stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first assesses acquisition of reading and writing, as well as initial mathematical elements. The test is taken by children in the second year of elementary school, aged seven to eight.• The second stage is an appraisal of the acquisitions of students in the final year of elementary school, ages 10-11 in the seven major skill areas.• The third stage concerns students in the final year of <i>collège</i> (lower secondary school, aged 14-15). It assesses the seven skill areas of the <i>socle commun</i>.
Germany	There is a national, standardised marking system across all <i>Länder</i> and for all levels of schooling, and an agreement on recognition/standardisation of the <i>Abitur</i> (upper secondary leaving certificate/higher education access certificate). Common standards for assessment in primary and lower secondary education in a range of subjects have begun to be introduced. National tests to assess performance against the standards take place. The first national standardised language tests for Year 9 (students aged 14/15) took place in 2009. Further assessments took place in 2011 (primary level) and are planned for 2012 (secondary level). 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 are taken by students in Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 (aged 10, 12, 14, and 16 respectively).
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 seven/eight 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	The first new national diagnostic tests in Spain were taken by a sample of students in Year 4 (aged 10) and covered the four basic skills (literacy, numeracy, knowledge of the physical world, and social and civic competence). It is planned to introduce a similar diagnostic test for students in the second year of upper secondary education (aged 13/14). Prior to these tests, there were national sample surveys of student attainment at age 12 and 16. In addition, all of the Autonomous Communities carry out their own annual diagnostic evaluation which assesses the basic skills achieved by students at ages 10 and 14. These tests are taken by the full cohort.
Sweden	National tests for children in Year 3 (aged 9/10) were introduced in Spring 2009.
• 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 eight/nine, 10/11, 12/13, and 14/15) as part of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The national curriculum, being 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). In addition, 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 in Japanese and mathematics were introduced for all 12- and 15-year-olds in April 2007. Following elections in August 2009, the Government scaled back the tests, selecting a sample of around 30 per cent of students to take part. However, many schools voluntarily take part boosting the participation rate to just over 70 per cent.
Korea	National assessment of educational achievement via scholastic achievement tests (SATs) for small samples of students in some year groups.
New Zealand	Until 2010, a sample of students at ages eight/nine and 12/13 were assessed via the National Educational Monitoring Project (NEMP). In 2012, NEMP will be replaced by the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement which will again assess a sample of students at these ages. 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 five 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 four/five. Systematic evaluation was previously conducted on a nationally representative sample of learners and learning sites. Annual National Assessments - standardised national assessments for languages and mathematics for students in the intermediate phase (Grades 4 – 6) (aged nine-12) and in literacy and numeracy for the foundation phase (Grades 1 – 3) (aged six-nine) were introduced in 2011.
• 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. Such testing at the individual state level involves the whole cohort.

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 table below. 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** At the upper secondary level, students in schools generally study for General Certificate of Education Advanced-level examinations (GCE A-levels). These 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).
 - 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. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2.
- Northern Ireland** At the upper secondary level, students in schools generally study for General Certificate of Education Advanced-level examinations (GCE A-levels). These 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).
 - 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. Students typically pursue three of their four or five AS qualification subjects to A2.
- Wales** In Wales, the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification was introduced in 2007. It combines personal development skills with existing qualifications like A levels, NVQs and GCSEs to make one wider award.
- 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 federal state (*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.