



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



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The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of Cedefop.

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Table of contents

- Chapter 1. Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET.
- Chapter 2. Main challenges and policy responses.
- Chapter 3. External factors influencing VET.
 - 3.1. Demographics.
 - 3.2. Economics.
 - 3.3. Labour market.
- Chapter 4. Education attainment.
 - 4.1. Share of high, medium and low level qualifications.
 - 4.2. VET learner share of the total VET population.
 - 4.3. VET learners by level.
 - 4.4. Female share.
 - 4.5. Early leavers from education and training.
 - 4.6. Participation in lifelong learning.
 - 4.7. VET learners by age.
- Chapter 5. VET within education and training system.
- Chapter 6. Apprenticeship.
- Chapter 7. VET governance.
- Chapter 8. VET financing mechanisms.
- Chapter 9. Teachers and trainers.
 - 9.1. VET teacher types.
 - 9.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers.
- Chapter 10. Shaping VET qualifications.
 - 10.1. Anticipating skill needs.
 - 10.2. Designing qualifications.
- Chapter 11. Quality assurance.
- Chapter 12. Validation of prior learning.
- Chapter 13. Incentives for learners.
- Chapter 14. Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision.
- Chapter 15. Guidance and counselling.
- Vocational education and training system chart.
- VET Programme Types.
 - Apprenticeship programmes leading to EQF level 2 and 3, ISCED 351/352.
 - School-based VET programmes leading to EQF level 3, ISCED 351, 352.
 - Apprenticeship programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354..
 - College-based VET programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 351, 354.
 - Higher apprenticeships leading to EQF level 5 and 6, ISCED 551, 554, 665.
 - College-based higher VET leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 551, 554.
 - Higher apprenticeships leading to EQF level 7, ISCED 767. Higher apprenticeships at Doctoral level have not yet been developed..
 - Higher VET leading to EQF 7, ISCED 767.
- References.

CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

VET in the UK:

- skills development is a major priority of all four countries (1) ;
- there is an increased demand for apprenticeships and skills-for-work;
- across the UK there is a high participation rate (66%) (2) in adult and continuing education;
- early leaving from education and training has decreased in the last decade and is slightly above the national target set at 10% (3) .

Distinctive features: (4)

The UK government has devolved decision-making powers in several areas of policy responsibility, including governance of VET, to the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. While there are similarities between the systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, reforms are creating greater divergence and the Scottish system has always been different in many ways from those of the rest of the UK.

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different governance, regulation and quality assurance bodies. There is a complex institutional framework in the UK VET sector, with the policymaking authority for VET in England being the Department for Education, while the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy are responsible in Northern Ireland, and the Scottish and Welsh governments in Scotland and Wales respectively. The qualifications market in the UK is jointly driven by government policies and private interests. This has led to a large choice of qualifications and awarding organisations.

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- [1] See: Strategic development of VET under Section [12. Shaping VET qualifications - design](#)
- [2] 66% of UK workplaces that responded to the UK [Employer Skills Survey 2017](#) had arranged on-the-job or off-the-job training for employees in the preceding 12 months, with on-the-job training slightly more popular. Adult and continuing education is part of the formal education system, but is also offered as non-formal training by employers and training providers.
- [3] Drop-outs under 15 years old are redirected to VET earlier than other school-age learners.

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

Matching qualifications with employer needs and increasing employer engagement with education and training are high priorities in the UK. The government's July 2016 Post-16 skills plan proposes to simplify college-based VET in England by creating clear routes to occupations through qualifications developed with input from employers by 2019. The Regulated Qualifications Framework introduced in 2015 gives awarding organisations increased freedom and flexibility to develop qualifications that meet specific labour market needs. Qualifications are now expected to be validated and supported directly by employers rather than follow prescriptive rules and structures imposed by government agencies.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework retains its credit and unit-based structure. Colleges in Scotland align their provision to the needs of employers and the Scottish economy through outcome agreements and a broad range of qualifications through their new regional governance structure. The Scottish Funding Council works with colleges to ensure outcome agreements address priority needs within their regions and contribute to improving young people's life chances. The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce also encourages colleges to develop more productive partnerships with local employers, schools and authorities.

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales continues to add clarity on the qualifications system and recognises all forms of learning across all levels and abilities. Vocational qualifications have also been classified as either IVET or CVET to clarify their purpose and whether they are introductory or lead to occupational competence. In 2015, Qualifications Wales was established as an independent agency tasked with ensuring that the Welsh qualifications system and qualifications meet the needs of learners, and promoting public confidence in the qualification system. The 2016 framework for post-compulsory education in Wales proposes to develop stronger links between education policy, providers and provision, and social and economic goals to ensure the future needs of Wales are met.

Youth training, further education, and apprenticeship reforms in Northern Ireland aim to raise skill levels of young people and will provide clear pathways from introductory VET to apprenticeships – which will start at upper secondary technician level – and higher education. Employers will be connected to education and training providers through a strategic advisory forum and sectoral partnerships to ensure curriculum design and training structure meet their needs. Further, the entitlement framework now encourages collaboration between post-14 school provision and vocational further education college provision. Centres of specialism and expertise will be set up in colleges that will develop networks of experts who will share the latest developments in curriculum and skills training.

Data from Spotlight on VET United Kingdom 2016/17 (5) .

CHAPTER 3.

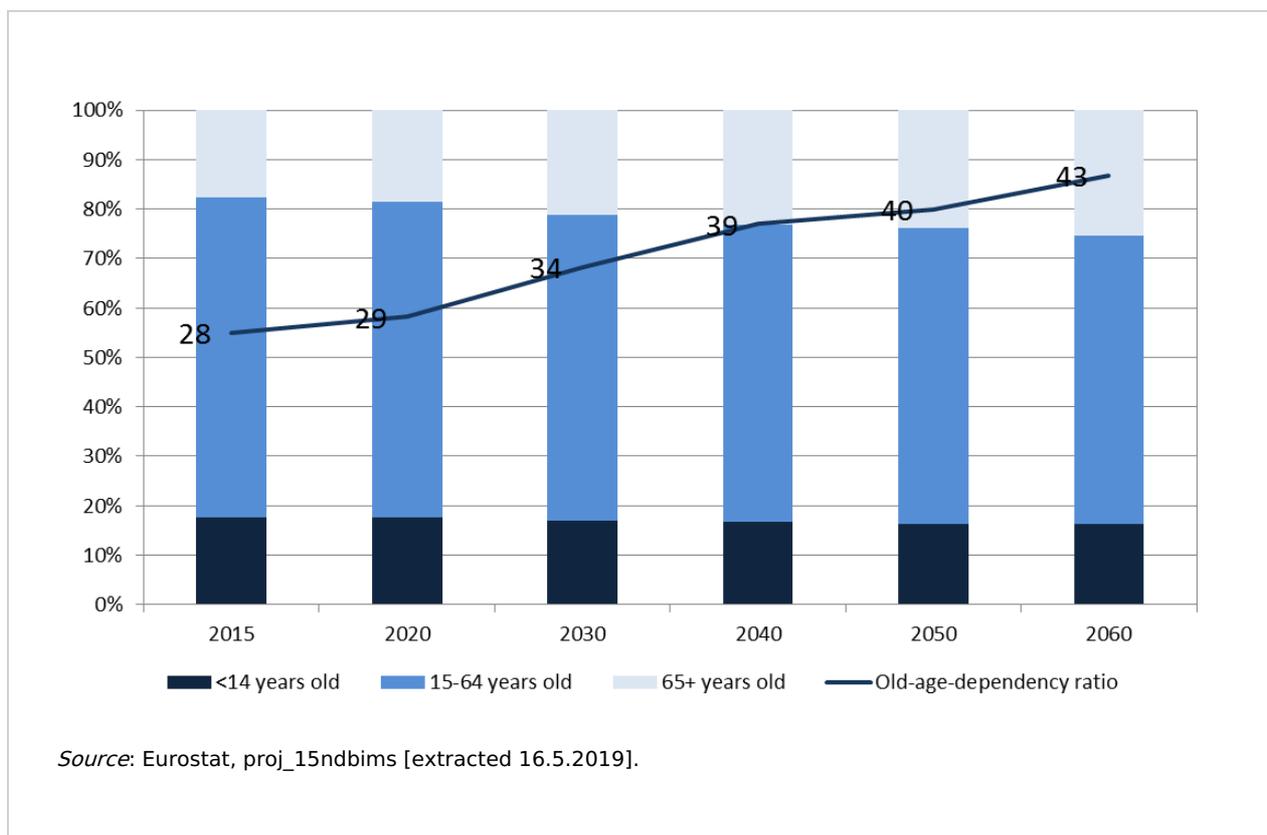
External factors influencing VET

3.1 Demographics

Population in 2018: 66 273 576 (6) .

Population increased since 2013 by 3.7% due to natural growth and migration (7) .

The UK old age dependency ratio is showing a trend towards an aging population, with more people reaching pension age. It is expected to increase from 28 in 2015 to 43 in 2060 (8) .



Demographic changes have an impact on VET.

The amount of job roles requiring intermediate and higher skills and education is rising in the UK and it is expected that it will become even more important to possess specialist skills and higher education in the coming years, in order to qualify for a more technologically advanced labour market.

The demographic trend towards an ageing population raises challenges for VET. There may need to be a renewed focus on adult education and upskilling to keep up with the needs of the labour market. 'As working lives are getting longer and the pace of technological change is increasing, the number of significant changes an individual will have to adapt to during their working life will increase.' (9)

Furthermore, efforts to curb immigration may result in a need to supply a greater number of intermediate skilled workers from the native labour force. The UK has relied on EEA skilled labour and curbs on immigration will impact on the skills profile of the workforce. (10)

3.2 Economics

Information not available

The UK has a market-based economy and is a major international trading power. Financial services as well as pharmaceutical, petroleum, automotive, aerospace, telecommunications and other technological industries play an important role in the UK's economy, with the services industry being the largest contributor.

3.3 Labour market

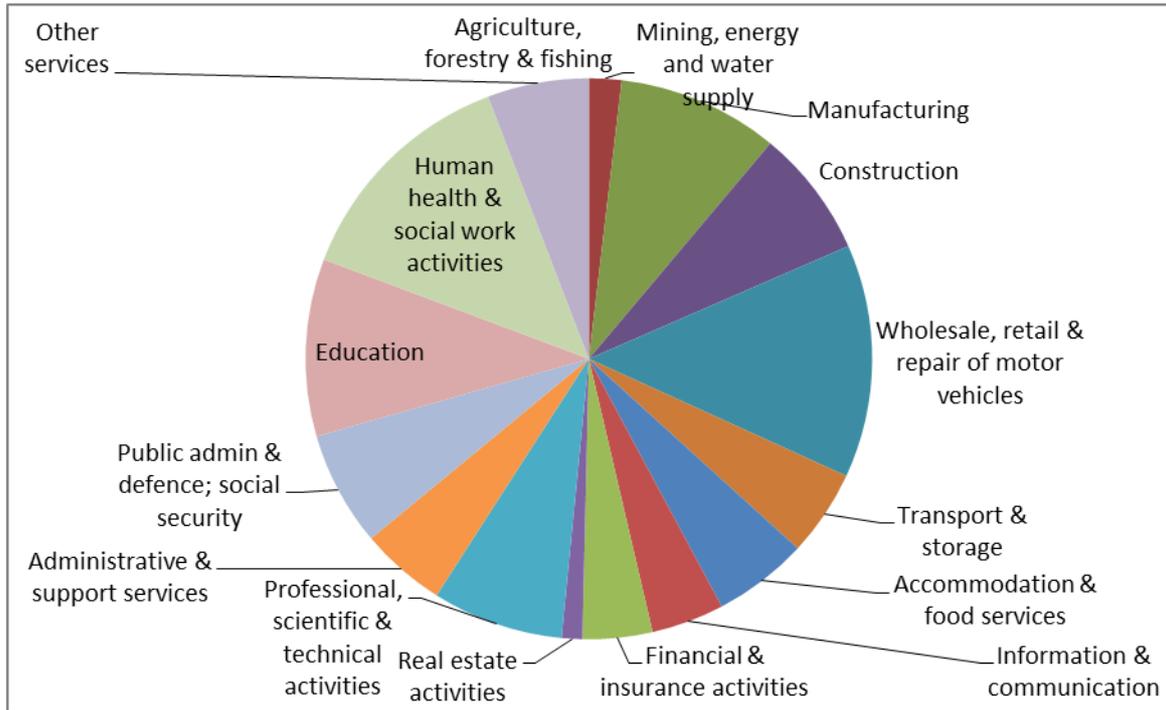
The UK labour market is demand-led and amongst the least regulated in the world. Skill shortages exist in various sectors.

The top five occupations experiencing shortages are currently finance, medicine associate professionals, nursing and midwifery, other health professionals and ICT (11) .

The UK Government lists shortage occupations for work permit purposes and currently includes various engineering and technician jobs, medicine, health, science, teaching (secondary level), IT/computing, chefs and arts amongst other professions (12) .

UK NARIC (13) works with the UK immigration authority by providing recognition of formal qualifications from abroad to the most appropriate level within the UK education system.

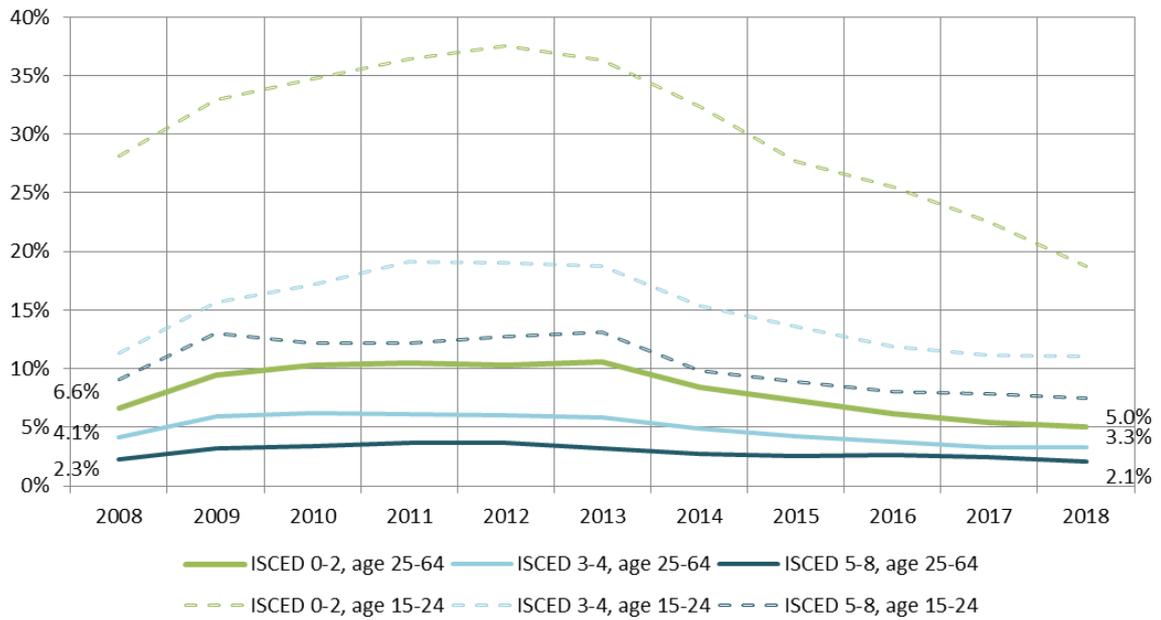
Employment in the UK by industry



Source: Office for National Statistics (2018: [employment by industry](#) [accessed 6.7.2018]).

Total unemployment (14) (2018): 3% (6% in EU28); it decreased by 0.9 percentage points since 2008 (15) .

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2008-18

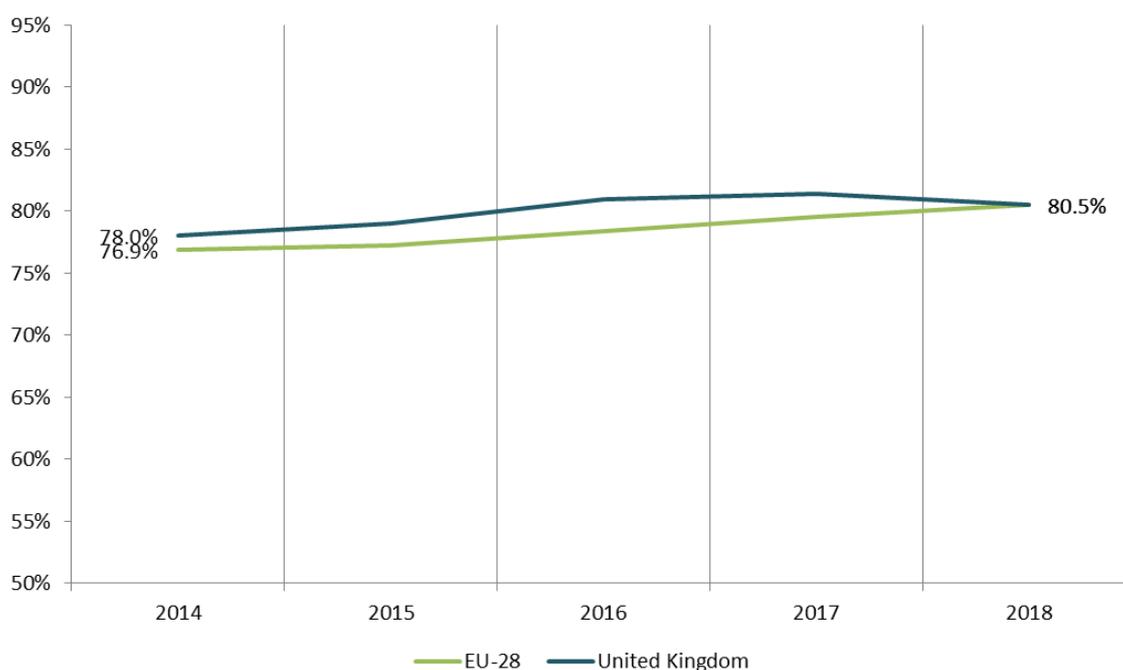


NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education. ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.
 Source: Eurostat, ifsa_urgaed [extracted 16.5.2019].

People with low qualifications experience higher unemployment rates compared to those with middle or higher level qualifications. Unemployment increased during the economic crisis (especially among young people aged 15-24 with low qualifications), but has regained the pre-crisis levels. Moreover, in 2018 unemployment rates are lower than in 2008 in all age groups.

Employment rate of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates increased from 78.0 % in 2014 to 80.5% in 2018 (16) .

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

The increase (+2.5 pp) in employment of 20-34 year-old VET graduates in 2014-18 was lower compared to the increase of all 20-34 year-old graduates (+3.2pp) in the same period in the United Kingdom (17) .

See Cedefop (2018). *The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe. Volume 3: the responsiveness of European VET systems to external change (1995-2015). Case study focusing in England.* [(17a)]

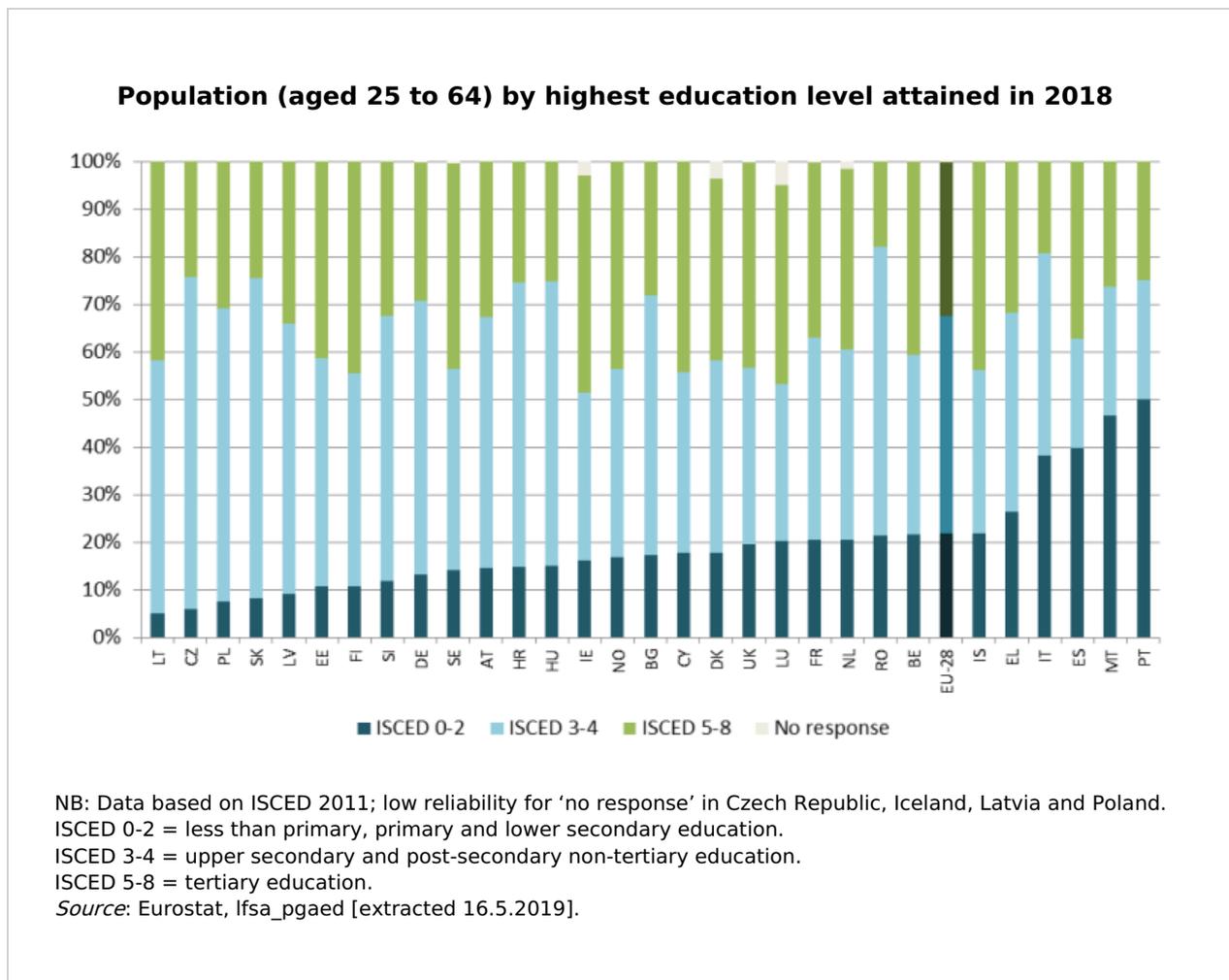
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- [6] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].
 - [7] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].
 - [8] Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).
 - [13] UK NARIC is the National Agency responsible for providing information, advice and opinion on academic, vocational and professional qualifications and skills from all over the world: <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>
 - [14] Percentage of active population, 25 to 74 years old.
 - [15] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 20.5.2019].
 - [16] Eurostat table edat_ifse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].
 - [17] NB: Break in time series. Eurostat table edat_ifse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

In 2018, the share of population aged up to 64 with higher education in the UK was the sixth highest in the EU28+(43.1%) and well above the EU average (32.2%) in the same group. The share of those with low level qualifications (19.6%) is below the EU average (21.8%) while middle-level qualifications is rather low (37.1%) compared to the EU average (45.7%) and the seventh lowest in the EU, following Spain, Portugal, Malta, Luxembourg, Iceland and Ireland.



See Cedefop (2019). *The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe. Volume 6: vocationally oriented education and training at higher education level. Expansion and diversification in European countries. Case study focusing on United Kingdom.* Cedefop research paper; No 70.

https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_cedefop_chan...

4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2017

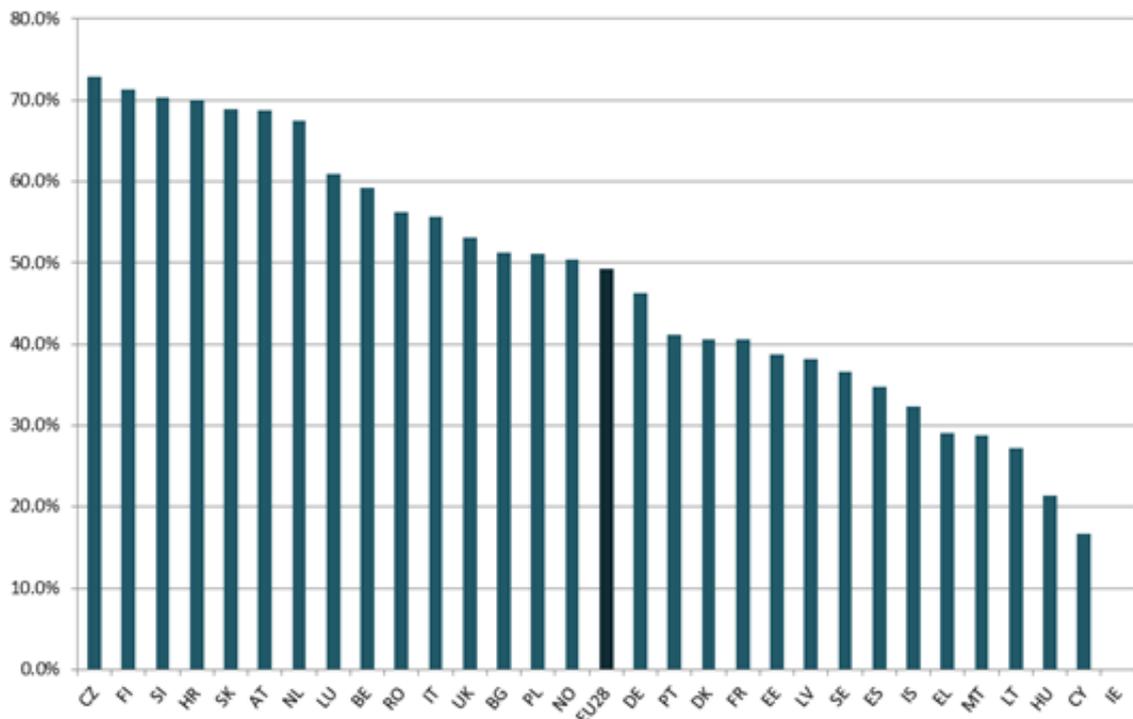
lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
17.5%	46.6%	Not applicable

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_ens01, educ_uoe_ens04 and educ_uoe_ens07 [extracted 16.5.2019].

The share of learners in VET increased since 2013, by 5.7% and 2.9% respectively in lower and upper secondary education.

The share of upper-secondary VET learners compared to the total number of learners in upper secondary education increased from 43.8% in 2013 to 46.6% in 2017 (+2.9 pp) in the UK. UK was among the eleven EU28+ countries that had a positive change in the VET population while nineteen countries had seen a decrease in the share of upper-secondary VET population in the same period (18) .

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2017



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

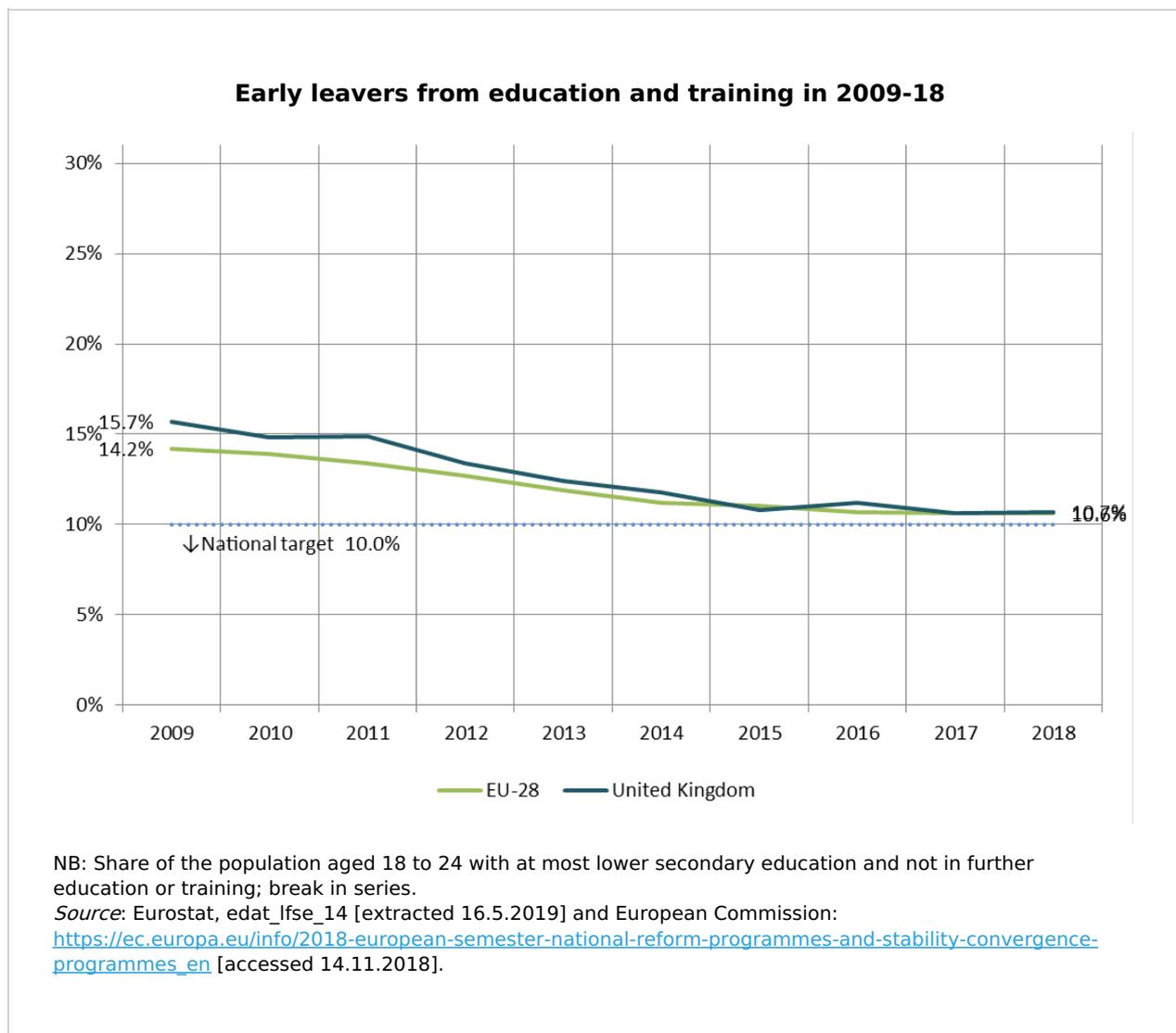
Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_ens04 [extracted 16.5.2019].

4.4 Female share

Information not available

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has dropped by 5 percentage points from 15.7% in 2009 to 10.7% in 2018, close to the national target set for 2020 (10%) and close to the EU average share (10.6%) in 2018.

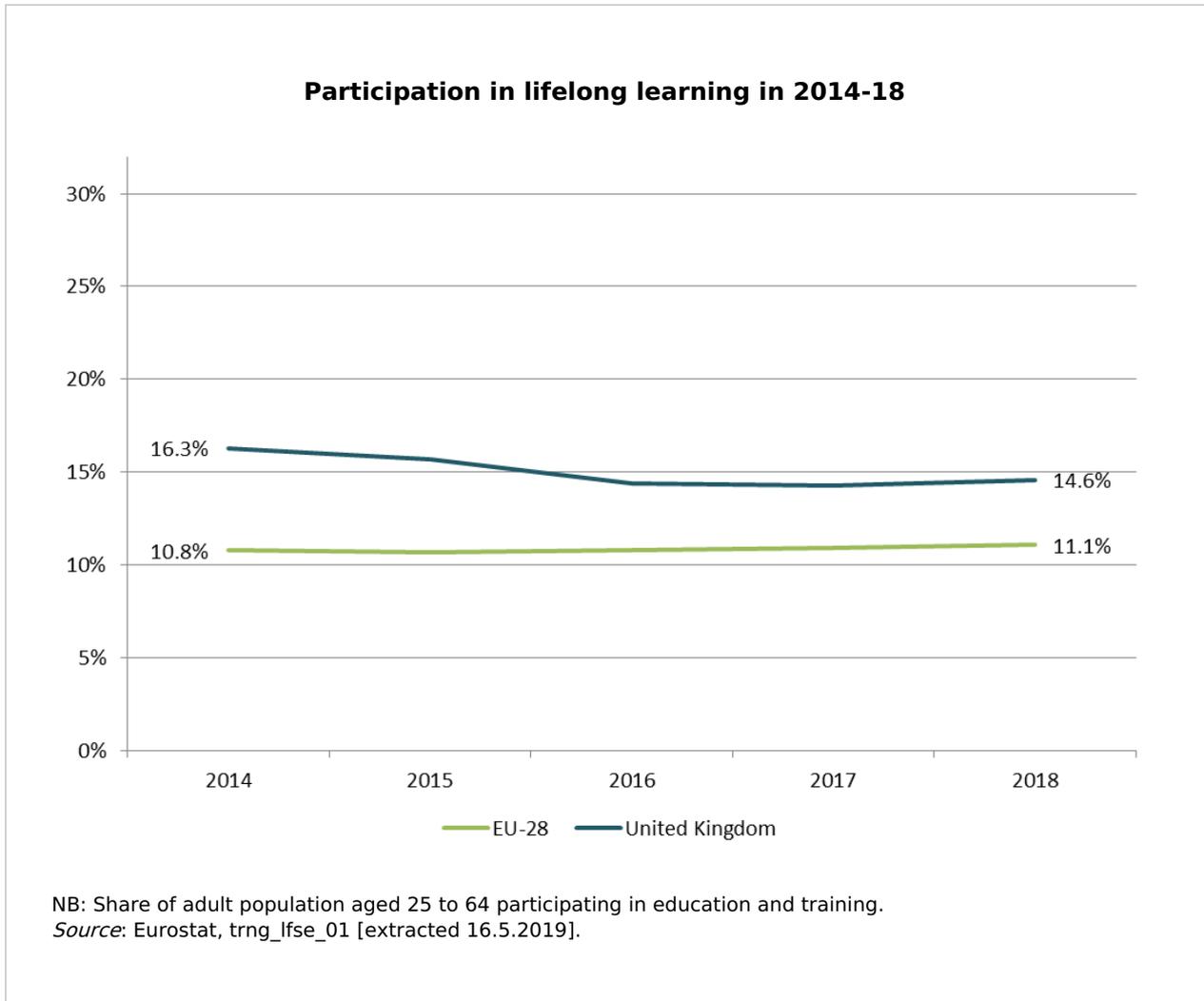


Education or training is compulsory up to age 16 (18 in England). Most VET programmes can be accessed from age 15/16, although learners can be introduced to VET earlier after dropping out of compulsory schooling (19) .

More information on early leaving from education and training is available in the Cedefop report 2017: *United Kingdom - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage* (20)

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education.



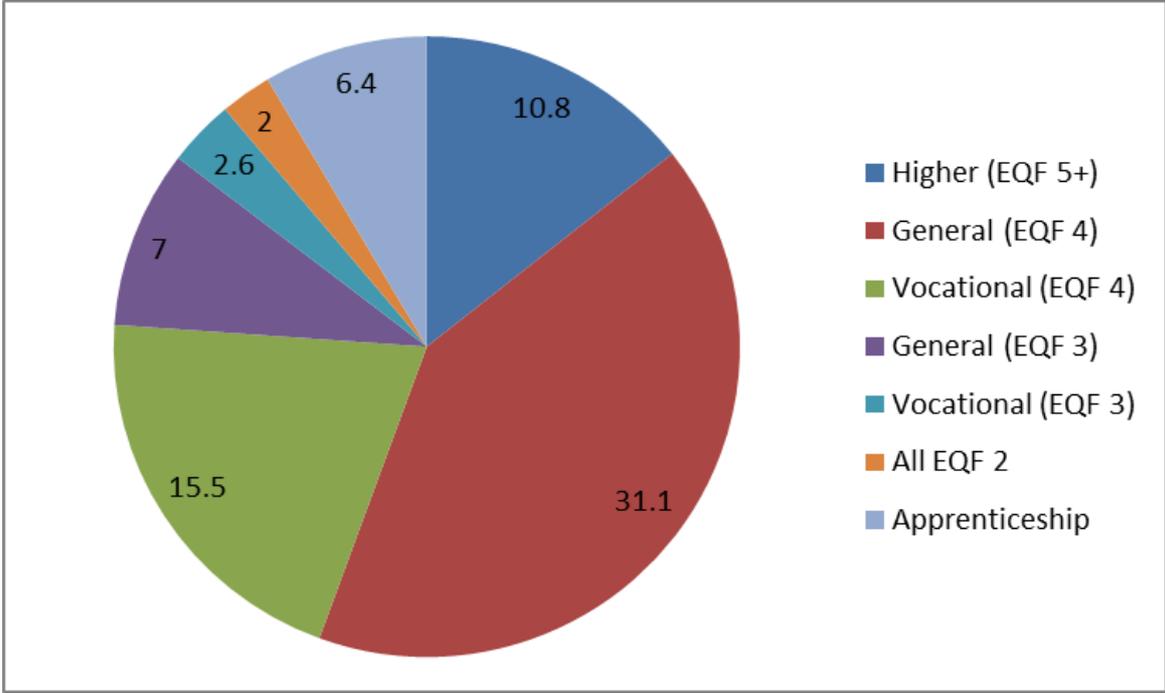
Participation in lifelong learning decreased (-1.7 percentage points) from 16.3% in 2014 to 14.6% in 2018, at 3.5 percentage points above the EU-28 average (11.1%) in 2018.

4.7 VET learners by age

In England, 2.2 million people registered with further education (FE) colleges in 2017/18, 1.4 million of those VET learners (63.3%) were adults (21) .

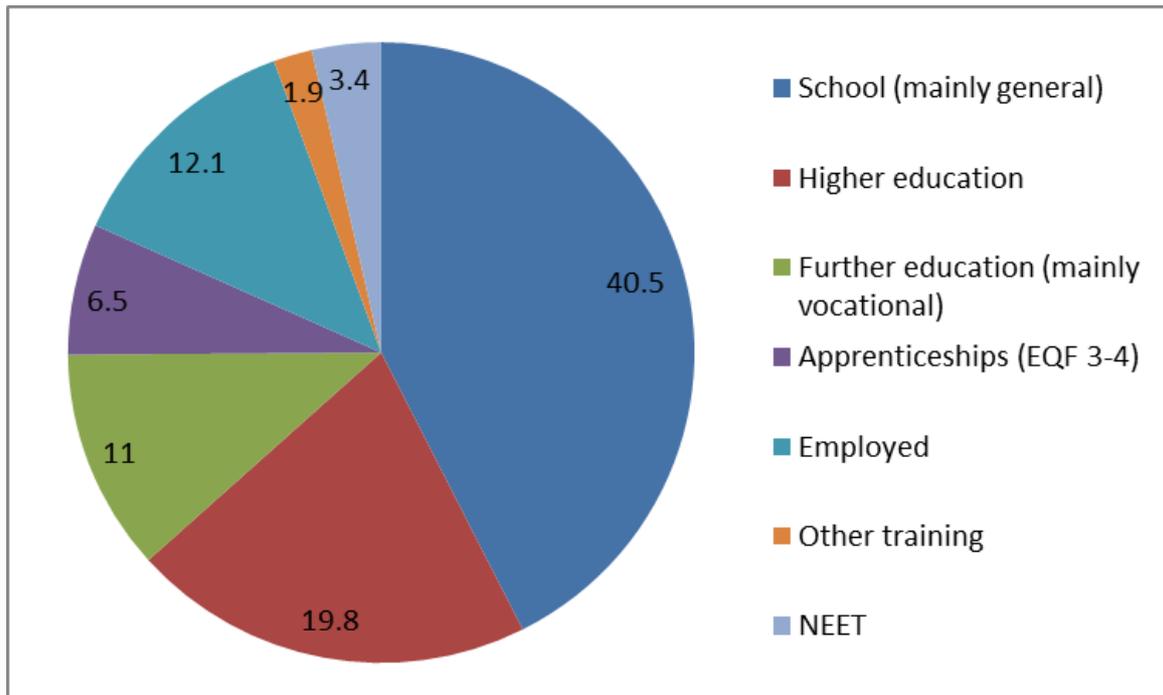
Adult and continuing education is part of the formal education system, but is also offered as non-formal training by employers and training providers.

Participation of 16-18 year olds in education and training in England in 2017 (%)



Source: Department for Education (2018). [Participation in education, training and employment: 2017](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

Participation of 16-19 year olds in education and training in Scotland in 2018 (%)



Source: Skills Development Scotland (2018). [Annual Participation Measure for 16 - 19 year olds in Scotland 2018](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

[18] Data not available for the Netherlands.

[19] In 2019, national achievement (completion) rates in the 19+ education and training and in apprenticeships were 88.3% and 67.3% respectively:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/789589/201718_NARTs_MainText.pdf

[20] http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_-_leaving_education_early.pdf

[21] Association of Colleges (2017). *College key facts 2017/18*.
https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Key_Facts_2017-18_1.pdf

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- preschool education (ISCED level 0);
- primary education (ISCED level 1);
- lower secondary education (ISCED levels 2 and 3)
- upper secondary education (ISCED 4);
- higher/tertiary education (ISCED levels 5, 6, 7 and 8).

Pre-school education is provided in nurseries and children centres (years 0-5) (years 0-4 in N. Ireland).

Primary education is offered in schools:

- from age 4 for 7 years in N. Ireland; or
- from age 5 for 6 years in England and Wales; and
- from age 5 for 7 years in Scotland.

Secondary school starts after completion of primary schooling. Lower secondary programmes last:

- three years (grades 7-9) (Key Stage 3) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; or
- two years (grades 8-9) (National 1-4/Intermediate 1) in Scotland.

Upper secondary programmes (grades 10 and 11) are available to learners over 14. (Key Stage 4 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and National 5/ Intermediate 2 in Scotland).

[....]

Education or training is compulsory from the age of 5 (4 in N. Ireland) up to age 16 (18 in England).

There is a range of education and training providers within the UK VET sector. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, providers include lower secondary schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges (22) , further education (FE) colleges (23) and higher education institutions (HEIs) in addition to private training organisations and work-based learning providers (24) .

Most VET programmes can be accessed from age 15/16, although learners can be introduced to VET earlier after dropping out of compulsory schooling or combining vocational subjects with general secondary study. Vocational education and training (VET) is available at secondary and higher education levels in the UK; (EQF levels 2 to 7).

Vocational education and training (VET) is available at secondary and higher education levels in the UK; (EQF levels 2 to 7). Most VET qualifications are taken at EQF level 3 and EQF 4 (25) in the further education (FE) sector (26) .

VET qualifications exist in a wide variety of sectors and prepare learners for work and further study. Programme duration varies by subject area, level of study and type of learning and is between one and four years.

School-based VET is provided in schools and colleges and includes:

- predominantly school-based programmes that combine general academic study with VET elements;
- broad VET programmes (27) ;
- specialist occupational programmes;
- work-based learning (technical and occupational learning) may take place both in a VET provider setting and a workplace, in the following forms:
 - (school) workshops;
 - in-company training for VET learners;
 - on-the-job apprenticeship training.

Learning options in formal (school-based) VET:

- full-time;
- part-time (evening classes);
- distance learning;
- in-company training on a block- or day-release basis;
- combined with an apprenticeship, where technical and occupational learning takes place:
 - on the job,
 - of the job.

Apprentices are employed and are taught core, transferable skills. A national qualification is awarded upon completion (28) .

Adult and continuing education is part of the formal education system, but is also offered as non-formal training by employers and training providers:

- in formal VET, the same learning options apply for adults as for minor learners:
 - full-time;
 - part-time;
 - dual (apprenticeship) learning;
- - distance learning;
- non-formal training is delivered:
 - on-the job;
 - off-the job.

Main vocational qualifications offered in the UK (29)

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales:

- **GCSEs:** General Certificate of Secondary Education (RQF/CQFW levels 1 and 2 corresponding to EQF levels 2 and 3 respectively). GCSEs in vocational subjects are available in all three countries;
- **BTEC:** Business and Technology Education Council qualifications RQF level 2 are offered in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (see also; Pearson [What is a BTEC?](#))
 - BTEC Awards;
 - BTEC National Awards;
 - BTEC First Awards. (Pearson. [About BTEC Firsts](#));
 - BTEC certificates;
 - BTEC Diplomas.
- **NVQ:** National Vocational Qualifications are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. NVQs sit within the RQF (Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland in place since 2015) and CQFW (Credit and qualifications framework of Wales).

In Scotland:

- **SVQ:** Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. SVQs sit within the SCQF (Scottish credit and qualifications framework).
- **National Certificates** are offered in both vocational and academic subjects mostly in full-time education
- **NPAs: National Progression Awards** are usually short, more flexible programmes for employees or people returning to work, though are also taken as part of a wider curriculum of qualifications within the school or college setting

*[National Certificates and National Progression Awards are **National Qualifications Group Awards** in which students accumulate credits towards distinctive group awards (EQF level 3 programmes). They allow entry to more advanced study and employment.]*

- **Professional Development Awards**
- **HNCs: Higher National Certificate**
- **HNDs: Higher National Diploma**

-
- [22] Sixth form programmes are offered in years 12 and 13 in secondary general or vocational (college-based) programmes to often acquire an A level (EQF 4), but also vocational qualifications at the same level: <https://www.aoc.co.uk/sixth-form-colleges>
- [23] See <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>. Further education colleges are accessible to both young people below 18 and adults; programmes include general academic study, key competences, general vocational programmes, study that may be focused on a specific sector as well as off-the-job apprenticeship training.
- [24] See also Section VET governance/education providers for a full list of all education providers in the UK and the devolved administrations.
- [25] See also: <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>
- [26] FE programmes are accessible to learners over 16 (end of compulsory schooling); a great number of adult learners follow such programmes.
- [27] Broad vocational programmes cover a field of employment rather than an occupation. For example, students can take BTEC national qualifications in areas such as sport or performing arts.
- [28] See Section: Apprenticeships.
- [29] See also table UK national qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF in Section [8](#), VET governance; and the [European inventory of NQF 2018](#)

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

Recent developments ([(30)])

Apprenticeships in the UK are offered as basic training at secondary level to advanced education and training at higher education level. The table below shows at which levels training is available.

NQFs and apprenticeship levels in relation to the EQF

RQF / CQFW	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	EQF	Scotland	SCQF
8	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	8	Professional Apprenticeships	12
7	Degree / Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	7	Professional / Graduate Apprenticeships	11
6	Degree / Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	6	Professional / Graduate Apprenticeships	10
					Technical / Graduate Apprenticeships	9
5	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	5	Technical / Higher Apprenticeships	8
4	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships		Modern Apprenticeships	7
3	Advanced Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships	4	Modern / Foundation Apprenticeships	6
2	Intermediate Apprenticeships	Foundation Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships / Traineeships	3	Modern Apprenticeships	5
	Traineeships	Traineeships				

NB: EQF: European qualifications framework.
 CQFW: Credit and qualifications framework of Wales.
 NQF: National qualifications framework.
 RQF: Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland.
 SCQF: Scottish credit and qualifications framework.
 Source: ReferNet UK, 2018.

Apart from the new apprenticeship standards in England (31) it is the qualifications within the apprenticeship frameworks that are benchmarked to the NQFs (32) , not the frameworks as a

whole.

All UK apprentices are employed and off-the-job training is available from colleges and independent training providers and training organisations with which colleges subcontract. Independent training providers must be registered with the Register of Training Organisations to be eligible to deliver education and training services under the adult education budget in England.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the European database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches>

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- [30] See also Section: VET governance/apprenticeships.
- [31] In England most apprenticeship frameworks are in the process of being replaced by new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2015/16. The new standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.
- [32] National qualifications frameworks.

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

Governance of VET in the UK rests with the UK Government and Government departments in the Devolved Administrations (33) . Devolved Government legislation does not include detailed regulations, such as lists of approved qualifications, but the law provides for the respective

Government Ministers to issue the lists following advice from the relevant advisory body.

VET regulators and inspection/accreditation agencies in formal VET

Different inspection and review bodies exist in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; they are list in the table below:

England	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) - schools and further education colleges
Scotland	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) - school, further education and higher education qualifications not awarded by HEIs
	Education Scotland - schools and further education colleges
Wales	Qualifications Wales - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) - schools and further education colleges
Northern Ireland	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – schools, further education colleges and other providers delivering publicly-funded training programmes

Source: ReferNet UK.

In **England**, the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) holds responsibility for inspection of schools and further education colleges. Ofsted considers the overall effectiveness of the outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in addition to the effectiveness of leadership and management. Schools and colleges are inspected by Education Scotland in **Scotland**, Estyn in **Wales** and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in **Northern Ireland**. Education Scotland evaluates the outcomes and impact of education provision, the service delivery, as well as the vision and leadership of providers. Estyn reports on the quality of education and training provided, the standards achieved by students, and whether colleges provide value for money. ETI Northern Ireland focuses on the learners’ achievements, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the quality and effectiveness of the leadership and management of the curriculum.

Higher education provided at UK further education (FE) colleges is subject to quality review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and QAA Scotland through their Higher Education Review that involves peer review, student involvement, as well as analysis of core and thematic elements.

In **Scotland**, HE in the form of HNCs (34) and HNDs (35) in tertiary colleges is subject to inspection and review by Education Scotland, not QAA Scotland. However, for those colleges which are constituent parts of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) or Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC), their HNC and HND provision is subject to inspection and review by

Education Scotland and review by QAA Scotland.

The Integrated Quality Enhancement Review methodology in **Northern Ireland** includes peer review, developmental engagement and summative review.

The Hazelkorn report (36) recommends creating a new single body for regulation, oversight and co-ordination for the entire post-compulsory education and training sector in **Wales**. The Welsh Government White Paper *Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – Building a reformed PCET system* (37) set out how the new body, referred to as the *Tertiary Education and Research Commission*, would manage allocating resources, assuring and assessing quality, monitoring and managing performance and risk, regulation of the system and accreditation of institutions as well as strategic planning, co-ordinating, steering and providing advice of policy including a responsibility for research and innovation which all is envisaged to form a more coherent and integrated post-compulsory system.

National qualifications frameworks

Formal VET in the UK is organised within several national qualifications frameworks. The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) was introduced in **England** and **Northern Ireland** in 2015 and encompasses academic and vocational qualifications. The RQF gives awarding organisations increased freedom and flexibility to develop qualifications that meet specific labour market needs. Qualifications are now expected to be validated and supported directly by employers to ensure qualifications measure the knowledge and skills necessary for industry, rather than follow prescriptive rules and structures imposed by government agencies. Level descriptors have been revised, but the same eight framework levels (plus entry levels, see table below) remain from the previous Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), and the existing qualifications continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation.

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for **Wales** (CQFW) also has the same levels as the QCF/RQF. The CQFW is a meta framework which comprises three pillars. These are regulated qualifications, higher education qualifications and lifelong learning qualifications, which include workplace continuing professional development and bespoke business training, as well as non-formal learning, recognition of prior learning (RPL), and assigned accreditation for learning.

The **Scottish** Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) comprises 12 levels and includes formal, and an increasing volume of non-formal qualifications.

The CQFW, SCQF and the previous QCF describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours. RQF qualifications have, from 31 December 2017, been described in terms of total qualification time (38) as credit allocation to units and qualifications is not compulsory within the RQF. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. While NVQs sit within the RQF and CQFW, SVQs sit within the SCQF.

The UK qualifications frameworks correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as described in the table below.

UK national qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF

EQF	RQF	SCQF	CQFW
8	8	12	8
7	7	11	7
6	6	10/9	6
5	5/4	8/7	5/4
4	3	6	3
3	2	5	2
2	1	4	1
1	Entry 3	3	Entry 3

EQF	RQF	SCQF	CQFW
	Entry 2	2	Entry 2
	Entry 1	1	Entry 1

Source: QAA (2014). [Qualifications can cross boundaries: a guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland](#) [accessed 4.6.2019].

There is not always an automatic right to progression from one level to the next within the frameworks as education providers retain the right to set the entry requirements to individual qualifications based on individual awarding organisations' (see also 'Shaping qualifications - design') requirements. However, the unit-based structure of many qualifications opens up the possibilities for validation of prior learning and transfer of credit between qualifications (see section Validation of prior learning).

RQF levels are still to be referenced to EQF levels. An update on developments in England and Northern Ireland was presented in the EQF advisory group in February 2019, and an updated referencing report to reference the RQF and FHEQ to the EQF is planned to be presented in June 2019 (39) ; an updated referencing report has been prepared by the SCQF Partnership and presented to the EQF advisory group in December 2018 (40) ; Wales is currently in the process of updating the referencing report due to the changes in the level descriptors, the creation of Qualification Wales and the changes to quality assurance in higher education. This report will be presented to the EQF advisory group in June 2019 (41) .

Apprenticeships in England ([(42)])

The latest reform of apprenticeships in England is based on the Richard Review (2012). New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employer-led consortia (Trailblazer groups) (43) and the quality of the standards are being regulated by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (44) (see section Quality assurance). New apprenticeships must include a work contract and at least 20% off-the-job training in addition to English and mathematics, but there is no longer a requirement to include an occupational qualification within the programme. Standards are linked to single professions and the unit-based structure of the previous apprenticeship frameworks has been replaced with holistic end-point assessment. The new apprenticeship standards are currently being phased in and run in parallel with the previous frameworks.

Policy making authorities

There is a complex institutional framework in the UK VET sector with the Department for Education (DfE) having policy-making responsibilities in **England**; the policy-making authorities for VET in **Northern Ireland** are the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy, in **Wales** the body is the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Public Services and Department for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure, and, in **Scotland**, the Department of Learning and the Department of Lifelong Learning of the Scottish Government are responsible. The table below presents an overview of policy making authorities in the UK VET sector.

England	Department for Education (DfE) - all levels of education
Scotland	Scottish Government - all levels of education
Wales	Welsh Government - all levels of education
Northern Ireland	Department of Education (DE) - schools and teacher training
	Department for the Economy - further education colleges and higher education

Source: ReferNet UK.

Education (and training) providers

There is a range of education and training providers within the UK VET sector. In England, Wales

and Northern Ireland, providers include lower secondary schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges (45) , further education (FE) colleges (46) and higher education institutions (HEIs) in addition to private training organisations and work-based learning providers. An overview of education providers is presented in the table below.

England	Schools/academies - general academic and vocational secondary education
	Further education colleges - secondary and tertiary VET
	Independent training providers - secondary and tertiary VET
	Higher education institutions - higher vocational education
Scotland	Schools - general academic and vocational secondary education
	Tertiary colleges - secondary and tertiary VET
	Private training providers - secondary and tertiary VET
	Higher education institutions - higher vocational education
Wales	Schools - general academic and vocational secondary education
	Further education institutions - secondary and tertiary VET
	Colleges - secondary and tertiary VET
	Higher education institutions - higher vocational education
Northern Ireland	Schools - general academic and vocational secondary education
	Further education colleges - secondary and tertiary VET
	Private, community and voluntary sector providers - secondary and post-secondary VET
	Training organisations - secondary and tertiary VET
	Higher education institutions - higher vocational education

Source: ReferNet UK.

In **England, Northern Ireland and Wales**, FE colleges represent the largest group of VET providers, offering education to learners that are predominantly 16 years old and upwards, including a large number of adult learners. FE colleges offer vocational learning at entry level (EQF 2) through to higher VET (EQF level 7). Students may attend FE colleges on a full-time or part-time basis and combine the study with an apprenticeship.

In **Scotland**, VET is mostly offered in colleges providing vocational secondary from EQF level 2 and higher education and by private training providers, but also in secondary schools (EQF 2 - 4) and higher education institutions (HEIs). The recent introduction of graduate apprenticeships (47) means that VET is now increasingly being provided by HEIs in Scotland.

A large number of colleges exist in the UK, but many have in recent years merged to form larger regional units, a process that is still on-going in **England**.

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) (EQF 2-4) are VET institutions for 14-19 year olds in **England**. UTCs are formed through partnerships between universities, colleges and businesses to match national curriculum requirements to local needs and include work placements. UTCs combine core skills with early subject specialisation and links to higher education. Similarly, Studio Schools have been introduced in 2010 (48) for the same age range in **England**. These are small institutions offering vocational qualifications (at EQF levels 2-4), general qualifications (such as GCSEs) (49) as well as teaching through enterprise projects and work placements (50) .

To meet labour market demand for higher technical skills, a network of Institutes of Technology is being created in **England** focussed on skills development at qualifications framework levels 3-5 (EQF 4-5). These institutes will be sponsored by employers, registered with professional bodies and aligned with apprenticeship standards, and be both empowered and expected to design clear routes to employment in cooperation with employers and professional organisations. Moreover, funding from the government and employers was confirmed for five National Colleges in 2016. These National Colleges will focus on delivering technical skills at levels 4 to 6 (EQF levels 5-6) in the areas of digital skills, high speed rail, nuclear, creative and cultural, and onshore oil and gas.

- [33] The UK Government has devolved decision-making powers in a number of areas of policy responsibility to the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, such as governance for all levels and types of education, including VET. Whilst there are similarities between the systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, reforms are creating greater divergence and the Scottish system has always been significantly different in many ways to those of the rest of the UK.
- [34] Higher national certificate.
- [35] Higher national diploma.
- [39] Source: Cedefop (2019). *European inventory on NQF 2018: UK - England and Northern Ireland*, p. 16.
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf
- [42] See also section 'apprenticeships'
- [43] See also: Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education: Trailblazer apprenticeship groups: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-develop-an-apprenticeship-standard-guide-for-trailblazers> [accessed 26.8.2019].
- [44] Changed name as of 31 January 2019:
<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/about/news-events/name-change-ushers-in-exciting-new-dawn-for-t-levels-preparations/>
- [45] Sixth form programmes are offered in years 12 and 13 in secondary general of vocational (college-based) programmes to often acquire an A level (EQF 4), but also vocational qualifications at the same level (<https://www.aoc.co.uk/sixth-form-colleges>).
- [46] See <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>. Further education colleges are accessible to both young people below 18 and adults; programmes include general academic study, key competences, general vocational programmes, study that may be focused on a specific sector as well as off-the-job apprenticeship training.
- [47] Degree apprenticeships (in Scotland: Higher and Graduate apprenticeships) create a different pathway to obtaining university degrees. Whilst academic ability, including grades and numerical and reasoning skills are considered by the university or college, candidates are also interviewed for a job with a company (unless they are already employed with the company). Both employers and universities must be satisfied the applicant meets their respective requirements. There may therefore be a joint recruitment process.
- [49] General Certificate of Secondary Education (RQF/CQFW levels 1 and 2 corresponding to EQF levels 2 and 3 respectively). See also:
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2016.pdf

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is an executive agency sponsored by the DfE in **England**. Aside from funding learners aged between 3 and 19 and adult further education and skills training, the ESFA supports the building and maintenance programmes for schools, academies (51), free schools (52) and sixth-form colleges. A simplified, learner-led funding system is in place since 2013/14. Much of school-based VET is Government funded, but employers fund an increasing part of workplace training, such as in-company training and learning through specialist consultants and agencies.

An **apprenticeship levy** was introduced in 2017 to create long-term, sustainable investment in apprenticeships (53). The levy is paid by all large employers in the UK with a paybill of over £3m a year. Levy payers and non-levy paying employers are able to access funding to support their apprenticeship training. In **England** a growing number of education providers now receive funding directly from the Government rather than through local authorities. These are academies, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools (see section Apprenticeships). Privately funded training providers also operate within the UK VET sector.

The **Scottish** Further and Higher Education Funding Council, commonly known as the Scottish Funding Council, is the strategic body for the funding of teaching, learning, research and other activities across all levels of tertiary education in Scotland. Public (VET) schools are funded through and accountable to local authorities, with one exception being directly funded by the Scottish Government. Skills Development Scotland funds Modern apprenticeship programmes and other government funded programmes of learning.

Funding of VET in the **Northern Ireland** further education sector and for providers of specific Government-funded programmes is the responsibility of the Department for the Economy.

VET funding in **Wales** is traditionally the responsibility of the Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (also sponsored by the Welsh Government). In January 2014 the Welsh Government published its *Policy statement on skills* which set out its long term vision for employment and skills policy in Wales. This work was supplemented by the development of the *Framework for co-investment in skills*, also introduced in 2014, which sets out the principles for government and employer investment in skills (54). The framework aims to provide a foundation for shifting the emphasis from a government-led approach to skills investment to a system influenced and led by employers. The investment made by employers, supported by the co-investment framework, will place them in a stronger position to challenge the skills system in **Wales**.

Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups (targeted measures)

Formal VET targeted at vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities and learning difficulties are mostly offered in the same providers as other students; however, additional funding is available.

Lifelong Learning Partnerships (LLPs) consist of a variety of education providers ranging from voluntary sector providers to further and higher education institutions as well as employers and trade unions. LLPs often reach out to disadvantaged communities and assist disadvantaged learners to engage with education and training again.

Skills Development **Scotland** (SDS) updated its *Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland* and the Equality Challenge Fund in 2017 (55) for projects aimed at widening access to Modern apprenticeships. Organisations including charities, colleges and training providers

have received funding to help boost Modern apprenticeship numbers among under-represented groups such as individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and care leavers as well as tackling gender imbalance in certain sectors. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) outcome agreements require colleges and universities to produce access and inclusion strategies that define their inclusive practices and the impact this has on learners. The SFC expects colleges to evidence how they use funds to support students with educational support needs, including disabled students, to ensure they have an equal chance of successfully completing their programme of study (56) .

Incentives for providers

VET providers across **England** continue to have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their adult education budget (AEB), working with Local Enterprise Partnerships and local commissioners to determine what the appropriate distribution of funding should be to best meet local needs. From 2019/20 academic year, approximately 50% of the AEB will be devolved to six Mayoral Combined Authorities and delegated to the Greater London Authority who will be responsible for commissioning and funding AEB provision for learners resident in their areas.

The **Scottish** Funding Council bases funding of VET providers on Outcome Agreements with colleges and universities. These Agreements include learner retention, articulation and progression into further and higher education and other positive destinations, such as employment. More emphasis within the Outcome Agreements is now being put on areas including widening access, gender, skills, innovation and apprenticeships.

[51] See also <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

[52] See also <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/free-schools>

[53] The levy is paid across the whole UK and a proportion of funding is distributed to all four nations according to population; however, the portions allocated to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland do not need to be used exclusively to fund apprenticeships and can be allocated to other VET training needs.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In VET, categories of teachers and trainers are:

- FE teaching staff (57) in **England** are called teachers, trainers, lecturers, tutors, assessors, advisors and instructors;
- teaching staff in the VET sector in **Northern Ireland** use the professional titles of lecturer, teacher, trainer, tutor and assessor;
- teaching staff in the **Scottish** VET sector use the professional titles of teacher, lecturer, tutor, assessor and trainer;
- VET teaching staff in **Wales** use the professional titles of lecturers, teachers, tutors, assessors and trainers.

Different training and registration requirements exist at secondary education level to further and higher education level across the UK:

In **England** VET teachers working in maintained secondary schools must meet the requirements of the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), which includes a degree level qualification, GCSE (58) level subjects in English, mathematics and science in addition to obtaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and completing an induction year. The same statutory requirement to hold QTS is not in place for VET teachers employed by publicly-funded free schools and some academies.

In **Wales**, those training to teach in local authority funded secondary schools are required to gain QTS and complete an induction period by meeting professional standards set by the Welsh Government. There is also a requirement in Wales to complete an undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education, which includes assessment against the QTS (Qualified Teacher Status). In addition there are minimum requirements for GCSE attainment including a standard equivalent to a grade B in the GCSE examination in English and/or Welsh and in mathematics.

Those teaching in **FE colleges** (59) in the UK are usually referred to as lecturers (VET teachers) and those teaching work-based learning are normally called VET trainers. In **England** the criteria to teach at FE level are flexible in line with the criteria for teaching at higher education level, where the education provider decides upon the suitability of the teaching staff. Only voluntary professional registration exists (with the Society for Education and Training) (60) . Advice about professional standards for teachers and trainers in education and training in **England** is provided by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) (61) . In England it is not mandatory to obtain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status to teach in FE colleges, but it can be beneficial for teachers that also wish to teach at secondary level in maintained schools.

Teaching qualifications for the FE sector in **England** are available from higher education institutions and Ofqual-recognised awarding organisations (62) . Teacher training also takes place in-house, and in both colleges for further and higher education. Associate Teachers work with less responsibility than Full Teachers/Lecturers in terms of curriculum development and delivery. In the FE sector, Associate Teachers are often known as instructors or trainers and should work under the supervision of a Full Teacher. FE lecturers in **Northern Ireland** must possess a degree level qualification or a qualification at QCF level 5 (63) in a subject area relevant to the subject taught, plus three years relevant industrial experience. Lecturers must also possess or be enrolled in a teaching qualification, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (FE). In **Wales**, lecturers are required to hold a Certificate of Education, PGCE

(FE) qualifications or Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and those employed as teachers in institutions in the FE sector in Wales are required to have, or to be working toward, these relevant teaching qualifications.

In **Scotland**, teachers must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), which sets the standards and qualifications required by teachers for professional practice. Scottish secondary VET teachers must hold a first degree, a teaching qualification such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), or an undergraduate equivalent, such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd) or a concurrent degree, where a teaching qualification is studied alongside another specialism, e.g. a science or English. Additionally, English or English as a second or other language at Higher (SCQF (64) level 6/EQF level 4) and mathematics or applications of mathematics at National 5 (SCQF level 5) level is a mandatory requirement. The Scottish College for Educational Leadership provides programmes of learning for teachers after they have qualified; most notably the new *Into Headship* programme at SCQF level 11 (EQF 7) will be mandatory for all new head teachers from 2019. VET Trainers and VET teachers/lecturers in tertiary colleges do not need to register with the GTCS, although it is desirable and strongly suggested by the Inspectorate of Education – Education Scotland. It is moreover considered preferential to hold a GTCS recognised further education teaching qualification or be working towards one.

The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is the independent regulator in **Wales** for VET teachers in local authority funded schools, further education (FE) VET teachers and learning support staff in both school and FE settings. From April 2015, the requirement for professional registration was extended to FE teachers, and from April 2016 registration is also compulsory for school/FE learning support workers. Secondary VET teachers must possess a university degree, GCSE (65) subjects and a teaching qualification.

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

FE VET teacher qualifications available in **England, N Ireland** and **Wales** include the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE for FE), which is a postgraduate programme leading to Full Teacher status, and in England the Level 3 Award in Education and Training, which is a short introduction to FE teaching, the Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training, and the Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, which is the minimum qualification needed to obtain Full Teacher status.

There is no legal requirement for teachers in FE in England and N Ireland to complete CPD. On average, teachers completed 15 hours of CPD per year (66)

The Education and Training Foundation operates in **England** to improve professionalism and standards in the FE and skills sector and provides opportunities for CPD. Ofsted is the inspection agency for the quality of teacher education in **England**.

The **Scottish** College for Educational Leadership provides programmes of learning for teachers after they have qualified; most notably the new *Into Headship* programme at SCQF level 11 (EQF 7) will be mandatory for all new head teachers from 2019. In Scotland, it is recommended that VET teachers undertake six days of CPD annually (67)

In Wales, FE teachers should undertake 30 hours of CPD annually.

More information is available in the Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspective on teachers and trainers (68) .

[57] Those teaching in FE colleges are usually referred to as lecturers (VET teachers) and those teaching work-based learning are normally called VET trainers.

- [58] General Certificate of Secondary Education (RQF/CQFW levels 1 and 2 corresponding to EQF levels 2 and 3 respectively); see also: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2016.pdf
- [59] See <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>. Further education colleges are accessible to both young people below 18 and adults; programmes include general academic study, key competences, general vocational programmes, study that may be focused on a specific sector as well as off-the-job apprenticeship training.
- [60] Professional membership organisation for teachers and trainers in the UK. See: <https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/>
- [62] Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>
- [63] QCF qualifications (N. Ireland, see also Section 8. VET governance) continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation.
- [64] Scottish credit and qualifications framework.
- [65] General Certificate of Secondary Education (RQF/CQFW levels 1 and 2 corresponding to EQF levels 2 and 3 respectively). See also: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2016.pdf
- [66] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-78_en
- [67] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-80_en
- [68] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/teachers-and-trainers>

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

Various methods are in place to anticipate skill needs:

- the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) results, published regularly by the Office for National Statistics, contain labour market statistics;
- other national, regional and sectoral surveys and audits, such as the *Employer Skills Survey* (69) and *Working Futures* (70) , used along with the LFS to determine labour market needs and gaps;
- skills audits and surveys of employers' opinions.

Other stakeholders involved in providing information and recommendations for skills provision include:

- the Confederation of British Industry, whose research anticipates a growing skills gap with a particular need for higher level skills (71) ;
- the Department for Education (DfE) launched a model to anticipate future demand for, and cost of, apprenticeships in initial and continuing VET in a system driven by employer demand in 2017 (72) ;
- the *Long-term Apprenticeship Model* forecasts apprenticeship starts and costs for both levy and non-levy paying employers.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent, employer-led organisations working towards defining skills needs and skills standards in their industries. National Occupational Standards (NOS) (73) have been developed by SSCs and Standards Setting Organisations working with employers and national and regional organisations to specify competences required in the workplace.

In **England**, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) work towards improving local needs and bring together local and regional stakeholders in business and local authorities. LEPs and the new powers to English cities in the Localism Act are designed to give more freedom and a greater voice to local enterprises, in order to create a more demand-led qualification and skills system with a local focus.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has developed Skills Investment Plans for key sectors in collaboration with Industry Leadership Groups and other key industry players by analysing labour market and skills supply research. Regional Skills Assessment Plans take into consideration regional challenges and opportunities. The Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analytical Services Unit is part of the Scottish Government and conducts research that supports policy developments in VET, higher education and lifelong learning. Topics for research include skills shortages and gaps and training opportunities. In **Wales** these functions are carried out by Knowledge and Analytical Services and the Labour Market Information Unit within the Welsh Government.

The Department for the Economy requires further education colleges in **Northern Ireland** to submit annual development plans in line with the Government's priorities and adhere to Public Service Agreements and Funded Learning Unit models regarding finances in relation to strategic priorities. The skills barometer project built a model to estimate future skill needs and gaps by level, sector and subject area across a range of economic outcomes (74) .

10.2 Designing qualifications

VET qualifications - designers and concepts

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (**England and N. Ireland**) removed the requirements to structure qualifications in terms of units and learning outcomes (75) ; however, qualifications currently available are largely unit- and outcomes-based and allow for flexibility in delivery of training, except for new apprenticeships in England (76) .

The qualification frameworks in **Scotland** and **Wales** continue to be learning outcomes and unit based. Adult learning in particular is often centred on individual learners' needs both in terms of content and delivery method. Training programmes aimed at young people usually follow a more standardised structure. Qualifications and their broad content, unit and credit structure, learning outcomes and assessment standards are developed by independent awarding organisations in line with regulators' regulatory requirements and industry experts' and other stakeholders' input.

Assessment of VET qualifications

Study programmes leading to formal qualifications at secondary and tertiary, non-university level are internally assessed within education providers and workplaces if appropriate, but are not awarded until assessments have been externally verified by awarding organisations (also called examination boards) in the UK. Education providers that are registered as examination centres by one or more awarding organisations can conduct examinations for qualifications awarded by these awarding organisations.

Assessment of practical training

Work-based learning is also assessed in workplaces by qualified assessors. Assessors are usually trained staff with industry experience and knowledge of assessment approaches. In order to assess some qualifications, the assessors are required to possess relevant assessor qualifications as well.

Apprentices completing the new apprenticeship standards in England (77) are assessed at the end of the programme of training by an Independent End Point Assessor who is required to have up-to-date and thorough knowledge and experience of the specific occupation and ideally possess a Level 3 (EQF 4) assessor qualification.

Validation of prior learning is also possible, see [Section 14. Validation of prior learning](#)

Awarding bodies

Awarding organisations are also responsible for awarding the final qualifications and organising external moderation of student achievement. These organisations are recognised to operate in **England** and **Northern Ireland** by Ofqual and CCEA (78) Regulation respectively. Recognised Awarding Organisations are entitled to award accredited qualifications which are listed in the Register of Regulated Qualifications and part of the RQF.

Awarding organisations with approved qualifications registered on the CQFW (79) must be recognised by Qualifications **Wales** and are listed on the Qualifications in Wales database.

The main awarding organisation in **Scotland** is the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), which is a quasi-autonomous non-departmental public body and fulfils the roles of both an awarding body and an accreditation body. There are mechanisms in place to manage the potential conflict of interest between both parts of SQA; the Awarding Body is directly accountable to Scottish Government Ministers and the Accreditation function (SQA Accreditation) is accountable to a statutory Accreditation Committee and thence the Scottish Government. There are also a considerable number of other awarding organisations (including all higher education institutions with degree awarding powers) offering qualifications within the SCQF and also other organisations awarding qualifications often subject to accreditation by SQA Accreditation.

Occupational standards design - the role of employers

Most education and training programmes for young people that are publicly funded lead to a formally recognised qualification. This is part of the quality control process of VET. Education providers create curricula and deliver qualifications created by awarding organisations.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) (80) and other standard setting organisations, in association with employers, develop, maintain and update **National Occupational Standards** (NOS) to specify competences required to perform occupations and professions. NOS consist of units describing what individuals must be able to do, know and understand to perform specific jobs. NVQs/SVQs (81) and many other vocationally related qualifications are entirely or largely based on NOS or, if relevant, learning outcomes that need to be met for certification. NOS are reviewed to ensure programmes and qualifications include new technologies, innovations and working methods used in the labour market. The Government in **England** have no longer been mandating the use of NOS within their vocational qualifications system after the end of 2016; however, qualifications designers in England can continue to use NOS if they wish. The development and review of NOS are still continued by the three Devolved Administrations, **Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**. Following the change from state funding of the SSCs to self-funded organisations, only the most effective SSCs that are valued by industry have remained operational.

National Skills Academies (NSAs) are employer-led organisations developing the infrastructure and learning resources needed to deliver specialist skills to industry sectors in **England**. NSAs also strive for training programmes resources to be up-to-date and relevant in the current job market.

VET reform in England - more direct employer engagement in VET design (82) . The design process of VET is changing in England by moving away from a system in which a large number of awarding organisations develop qualifications based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) to a system where the outline content of new vocational qualifications (T levels) based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours related to occupations will be developed by employer-led consortia within 15 main technical routes. New apprenticeship standards (Trailblazers) are already being developed within the same 15 pathways. T level qualifications will be developed by a single awarding organisation for each of the occupational pathways. T levels, designed to be delivered in classroom-based settings, will be phased in from 2020 whilst apprenticeship trailblazers are currently run in parallel with the traditional apprenticeship frameworks.

The **Scottish** Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) is led by employers to strengthen their engagement in apprenticeships and aims to ensure that apprenticeships will be closely linked to areas of economic growth and job opportunities. SAAB oversees the development of apprenticeship frameworks and standards. The Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board, have taken up a key role in developing policy objectives to ensure that apprenticeships are aligned to changing needs of the industry in Wales.

The **Strategic Partnership strategy** provides the background for UK Government financed projects in which enterprises, employer federations, trade unions, trade associations, public bodies and other stakeholders collaborate to solve sectoral and regional issues including learning and skills.

Strategic development of VET in England

Strategic development of skills and lifelong learning in **England** is the remit of the Department for Education (DfE). Design of future VET in England is influenced by reviews such as the *Wolf Review of pre-19 vocational education*, the *Whitehead Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications* (83) and the *Richard Review of Apprenticeships* (84) . The former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published the *Skills for Sustainable Growth* strategy (85) in response to the Wolf Review with details of a planned skills reform. The *Plan for Growth* (86) strategy mentions that 'the creation of a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe' is one of the key skills actions and measures to be achieved. *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*

sets out how Apprenticeship reforms, and funding only good quality VET in England, will be accelerated (87) (see VET learning options about Tech Levels and the Technical Baccalaureate under [4. EQF 4, ISCED 351, 354 \[college-based VET\]](#)). *Fixing the foundations* – the UK Government’s productivity plan from 2015 – puts focus on the need to develop a highly skilled workforce to increase productivity (88) . Most recently the *Post-16 Skills Plan* sets out to streamline VET in England into 15 clear routes leading to skilled employment, either through two-year college courses or apprenticeships (89) as recommended in the *Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education* (90) .

Strategic development of VET in Scotland

The Scottish Government provides details of skills support in the *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* (91) , the *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland* (92) , the *National Youth Work Strategy* (93) and *Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition* (94) . The Government started a reform of the post-16 education which aims to increase efficiency and flexibility in learner provision and value for money as well as better meet regional needs. A further aim is to simplify the skills system so it is easier to understand for both individuals and employers. The Curriculum for Excellence includes more skills-for-work options for young people in addition to a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship (95) . The group responsible for the review of the curriculum comprised representatives from national and local Government, Education Scotland, higher and further education institutions, schools and the Scottish Qualifications Authority in addition to business interest groups, teacher unions and parent organisations. The *Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce’s final report* (96) from June 2014 includes recommendations on preparing school leavers for work, college education focused on employment and progression in learning, Apprenticeships focused on higher level skills and industry needs, and engaging employers with education and recruiting young people.

Strategic development of VET in Wales

The Welsh Government’s *Programme for Government* emphasises the importance of skills development in relation to economic growth and sustainable jobs. Qualifications are developed according to the CQFW high level principles. Future VET will be shaped by the *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales* (97) (see Section 2.2.3 regarding the Welsh Baccalaureate), *the policy statement on skills* (98) and the Welsh Government’s *Skills implementation plan* (99) . The latter emphasises the importance of aligning skills provision with the current and future jobs market, local needs and employer engagement. Welsh Government published *Towards 2030: a Framework for Building a World-Class Post-Compulsory Education System for Wales* in March 2016 (100) . The report’s recommendations include the aim to develop clear and flexible learner-centred learning and career pathways and to introduce more state regulation into the current market-demand driven education system.

Strategic development of VET in Northern Ireland

The Department for Employment and Learning’s (now: Department for the Economy) vision for skills development is articulated within the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures* (101) , which sets the overarching strategy for the development of skills (including vocational education and training) in Northern Ireland. This strategy will be realised by focusing on those entering the labour force for the first time; up-skilling the existing workforce; and ensuring that those currently excluded from the labour force are provided with the skills to compete for jobs, retain jobs and progress up the skills ladder. To help achieve these ambitions, the Department works closely with the Department of Education to ensure there is a strong collaboration between schools, further education colleges, universities and employers.

Other reviews in Northern Ireland aiming to enhance and shape future VET policy include the new Northern Ireland Strategy for Apprenticeships (102) which recommends that Apprenticeships should be at least two years long and start from level 3 (EQF level 4) (see [3. EQF 4, ISCED 354 \[Apprenticeship\]](#)). The Strategy for youth training from 2015 describes plans to create a baccalaureate-style curriculum that includes work-based learning that also replaces

apprenticeship provision at level 2 (103) . The 2016 Further Education (FE) Strategy gives colleges in Northern Ireland a major role in delivering apprenticeships and youth training as well as featuring prominently in strategic advisory forums and sectoral partnerships tasked with matching skills demand and delivery (104) .

Strategies to support learning opportunities for vulnerable groups

In **Wales**, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) recognises lifelong learning such as vendor/industry/professional qualifications and smaller 'bite size' units of accredited learning. Such achievements can be highly positive and help to raise the aspirations of disadvantaged learners. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) also recognises lifelong learning and bite size pieces of learning from all sectors and all types of organisations, including many aimed at disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. The SCQF includes two levels which are below level 1 of the EQF. At these levels the emphasis is placed on the learning which takes place as a result of learners' participation in, and the experience of, situations as well as the carrying out of basic tasks. The inclusion of these lower levels allows the SCQF to be an inclusive NQF for all learners including those who may not have been successful in mainstream education.

The **Northern Ireland** Strategy for Further Education, *Further Education Means Success* published in January 2016, recommends that colleges, in partnership with organisations in the voluntary, community, public and private sectors, support diversity and social inclusion through widening access to provision for those with low or no skills or who experience other barriers to learning. The strategy commits the colleges to adopting international best practice in the use of technology enhanced learning to support and improve teaching and learning, and adopt flexible approaches to learning to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Additional funding for learning opportunities of vulnerable people is also available in **England** and **Scotland** in section: [9. VET financing mechanisms](#)

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- [69] Department for Education (2018). [Employer Skills Survey 2017: UK](#) [accessed 12.10.2018].
- [73] See Section [12. Shaping VET qualifications - design](#).
- [74] The project was undertaken as part of a three-year sponsorship arrangement between the Department for the Economy and the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre.
- [75] The RQF gives awarding organisations increased freedom and flexibility to develop qualifications that meet specific labour market needs. Qualifications are now expected to be validated and supported directly by employers to ensure qualifications measure the knowledge and skills necessary for industry, rather than follow prescriptive rules and structures imposed by government agencies. Level descriptors have been revised, but the same eight framework levels (plus entry levels, see Table *UK national qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF* in section [8](#)) remain from the previous qualifications and credit framework (QCF), and the existing qualifications continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation.
- [76] In England most apprenticeship frameworks are in the process of being replaced by new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2015/16. The new standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.
- [77] See Section [7. Apprenticeships](#)
- [78] Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

- [79] Credit and qualifications framework of Wales.
- [80] Independent, employer-led organisations working towards defining skills needs and skills standards in their industries.
- [81] National vocational qualifications / Scottish vocational qualifications.

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

Most education and training programmes for young people that are publicly funded lead to a formally recognised qualification. This is part of the quality control process of VET.

VET regulators and inspection/accreditation agencies in formal VET

Different inspection and review bodies exist in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; they are listed in the table below (see also section 8 VET governance):

England	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) - schools and further education colleges
Scotland	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) - school, further education and higher education qualifications not awarded by HEIs
	Education Scotland - schools and further education colleges
Wales	Qualifications Wales - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) - schools and further education colleges
Northern Ireland	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) - schools, further education colleges and other providers delivering publicly-funded training programmes

Source: ReferNet UK.

QA arrangements for VET qualifications

Qualifications are designed and issued by independent awarding organisations. Those organisations set question papers or other assessments for their qualifications and examine candidates as well as reviewing examination centres' assessment of candidates and reviewing and verifying the work and standards of the centres. The processes of external review of assessment in examination centres are often referred to as verification. Verification is conducted by qualified individuals with quality assurance of assessment qualifications at level 4 (EQF level 5).

During the review leading to the withdrawal of the regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), for **England**, Ofqual (105) removed the requirement for awarding organisations to submit new vocational qualifications for accreditation before they are registered within the qualifications framework. Secondary school qualifications such as GCSEs (106) and technical qualifications with detailed design rules are still subject to a spot check of the qualifications' specification and a set of specimen assessment papers and mark schemes (107). The responsibility for quality assurance and relevance of other qualifications rests with the awarding organisations, although periodic Ofqual audits take place.

In 2016, CCEA (108) Regulation took over the regulation responsibility of vocational qualifications, within the RQF, that are exclusively provided in **Northern Ireland**. The work includes the recognition and monitoring of awarding organisations that operate in Northern Ireland and the accreditation of the qualifications they offer in Northern Ireland against published criteria and conditions.

Organisations which provide non-university qualifications can elect to be accredited by the **Scottish Qualifications Authority Accreditation** in accordance with the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) regulatory principles, but this is not mandatory. All programmes accredited by SQA will be credit rated and included on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). However, organisations can also get programmes credit rated and included on the SCQF through a range of organisations which carry out this function. SQA's Accreditation function has a mandatory remit to accredit certain vocational qualifications, including all Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). In addition, if an alternative competence based qualification is to be used as the mandatory qualification in a Modern apprenticeship framework then it must also be accredited by SQA. Certain other "licence to practice" qualifications must be accredited by SQA including the security sector and the licenced trade sector (109) .

Qualifications Wales was established in 2015 to take over the responsibility of approving and reviewing qualifications, in addition to developing the design of new qualification requirements and commissioning awarding organisations to develop new qualifications, in **Wales**. Qualifications Wales is undertaking a long term programme of review and reform of vocational qualifications in each major sector of employment. Four out of eight sector reviews have been or are close to be completed (110) . The reviews aim to find out whether current qualifications are effective in meeting the needs of learners as well as addressing the needs of employers, learning providers and professional bodies.

QA arrangements in apprenticeship

The Institute for Apprenticeships started operations in **England** in 2017 as an independent statutory body with a remit to develop and maintain quality criteria for apprenticeships and assessment plans, support employer-led development of new apprenticeship standards and regulate the quality of apprenticeships, including both approval functions for apprenticeship standards and quality assurance of assessment (111) . The institute is due to also take over responsibility for implementing the T level reform and change its name to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in 2019.

Employer-led sectoral partnerships are being set up in **Northern Ireland** as part of the apprenticeship reform to inform the approach for ongoing assessment and testing at the end of apprenticeships.

Non-formal training

Training organisations offering non-formal qualifications may register with the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education. Investors in People (IiP) is a nationally recognised business standard encouraging enterprises to invest in training. IiP certification gives an indication that an employer is committed to the development of workers.

[105] The regulator of all vocational qualifications within the RQF (Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland).

[106] General Certificate of Secondary Education (RQF/CQFW levels 1 and 2 corresponding to EQF levels 2 and 3 respectively). See also: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2016.pdf

[107] Ofqual. [Accreditation requirement](#) [accessed 20.2.2019].

[108] Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

There are generally less transfer opportunities to further and higher education for qualifications obtained outside a formal qualifications framework in the UK. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is granted at institutional discretion based on the RPL policy of individual awarding organisations in **England**.

Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning form part of the SCQF (112) in **Scotland**. There was previously a RPL network connected to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership which published a RPL toolkit (113) and an online guide that aims to increase and improve recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as formal learning. While the RPL Network is no longer in operation, the tools and supporting workshops continue to be available.

In **England**, RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning) was furthermore devised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (now: the Learning and Work Institute) and the former Learning and Skills Development Agency to aid recognition and validation of learning that does not lead to a formal award. RARPA includes a staged process in assessing individual learners' achievement by taking into consideration their starting point, identification of learning objectives, recording of progress and end of programme assessment.

Lifelong Learning mechanisms have been developed to allow non-formal education and training, such as community learning, in-company training and continuing professional development, to be recognised in accordance with the high level principles of the Credit and Qualifications Framework of **Wales** (114) .

The Department for the Economy in **Northern Ireland** aims to encourage more people, who may have less in the way of formal qualifications, to consider applying for places in higher education on the basis of accredited prior experiential learning (APEL). The *Northern Ireland University and College Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Guidelines* (115) were developed to facilitate entry to higher education – particularly Foundation degrees – for those who lack the required formal academic qualifications for higher education entry by accepting vocational qualifications and experiential learning partly or in full. The guidelines were endorsed by the universities and college sector and draw upon good practice within the sector and across the UK.

For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database (116) .

[112] Scottish credit and qualifications framework.

[116] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/european-database-on-validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

Across the UK, austerity measures have seen many cuts in state funding in recent years. Whilst the pre-16 schools budget has remained largely protected, reductions have occurred in the 16 to 19 and 19+ further education and skills budgets. However, various initiatives to raise numbers and the status of VET are in place in the UK (117) .

Training leave (England)

The *Right to Request Time to Train* initiative is a legal right in England to allow workers in businesses with more than 250 employees to request time to take up work-related training that will benefit the business. Training can be both formal and non-formal and take place in-house, at an external training organisation or be delivered through e-learning. Whether the business will pay for the training or pay the employee's salary during the training is left up to the discretion of the employer.

Trade Union Learning Funds (all four countries)

The Trade Union Learning Fund in England is administered by Unionlearn and provides funding to develop the capacity of trade unions and Union Learning Representatives to work with employees, employers and learning providers, to encourage workplace learning. The Scottish Union Learning Fund, the Wales Union Learning Fund and the Union Learning Fund for Northern Ireland fulfil similar roles.

The Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan (Wales)

The *action plan* goal is to help young people move back into education, training and employment. Measures taken to achieve this include the Jobs Growth Wales initiative that supports training and work experience. An evaluation of the action plan based on 2015 data found indications of a reduction in the rates of young people who are NEET, but that it was too early to determine the overall success of the plan (118) .

Financial support measures for specific target groups

Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) were replaced with Individual Training Accounts (ITA) (119) in October 2017. ITAs are payments for the unemployed and not currently in education or those in low paid work in **Scotland** who wish to learn a new skill or develop their skills further within recognised training programmes. ITAs focus on vocational courses and qualifications in a curriculum area aligned with the Scottish Government's Labour Market Strategy.

An Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to **Scottish, Welsh** and **Northern** Irish students between the ages of 16 and 18 depending on the students' and their families' financial situation. Bursary Funds are available via schools and colleges for 16-18 year olds who struggle to afford the cost of participating in their studies in England. Bursary Funds are specifically targeted towards vulnerable young people, such as those in care, on income support or those with disabilities, but also to other students struggling to afford transport, food or equipment costs. FE providers also receive learner support funding to support eligible adult learners with a specific financial hardship which is preventing them from taking part and/or continuing in learning.

Free lunches for disadvantaged students were extended to 16-18 year old learners at further education colleges (that offer predominantly vocational courses) in **England** from the autumn of 2014. These free meals were previously only available for disadvantaged students in secondary

schools with sixth form provision.

The Entitlement Framework (Northern Ireland)

The Entitlement Framework (EF) came into force in Northern Ireland in 2015, building on the Vocational Enhancement Programme which encouraged collaboration between post-14 school provision and vocational FE college provision. The EF guarantees in law that all learners in Northern Ireland have access to a broad and balanced curriculum with a minimum of 21 courses at lower and upper secondary level, a third of which must be applied and a third, general. Qualifications under the EF contain a range of courses that can be individually tailored to enhance students' employment chances and meet Government priority skills areas. Post-primary schools work together in local Area Learning Communities alongside further education colleges to plan and provide the full range of general and applied course choices for the young people in an area.

Use of EU tools to support mobility actions

The UK has the main building blocks in place to support the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). ECVET aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and promote mobility between different countries and different learning environments. ECVET activities are included in the UK Erasmus+ National Agency (the British Council and Ecorys (UK)) yearly work programme. UK ECVET Experts, appointed by Ecorys UK, raise awareness of ECVET to key stakeholders and promote and encourage organisations involved in mobility to use ECVET in geographical mobility linking ECVET to Erasmus+.

[117] The UK Government and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set individual budgets regarding education and skills funding.

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

The Apprenticeship Delivery Board (England)

The board consists of representatives from Barclays Banks, Fujitsu UK, the TV company Channel 4 and the City of London amongst others, that will meet and advise the government on how best to expand apprenticeships (120) . The board furthermore works with the National Apprenticeship Service and the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (121) to stimulate interest in and take up of apprenticeships in England.

The Flexible Workforce Development Fund (Scotland)

The fund is delivered by the Scottish Funding Council and is available to Scottish businesses that contributed towards the UK Government's apprenticeship levy. Funding can support up-skilling and re-training of individual employees in partnership with Scottish colleges. Employers in Scotland are eligible for a payment of up to £4 000 when employing an unemployed young person as an apprentice through Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive. This initiative is targeting young people facing barriers to employment, such as care leavers, carers, ex-offenders and disabled people.

Financial support for apprenticeships

Access is a **Welsh** Government programme that provides financial support of up to £3 000 to employers to take on unemployed adults (age 18+) as apprentices. The financial support may be used as a contribution towards wages and up to £1 000 in addition may be used for job-related skills training.

An Employer Incentive Payment of between £250 and £1 500 is available to employers whose apprentices successfully completes a full apprenticeship framework in **Northern Ireland**.

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

Careers advisors

Careers advice is offered by a range of professionals, including teachers and careers advisers employed in the education, social work and youth work sectors as well as job centre personnel. Their training varies from in-service training to formal and professional careers guidance qualifications. The Careers Profession Task Force's report *Towards a strong careers profession* (122) made detailed recommendations on raising the professional nature of the workforce. One area of concern identified was that careers advisers were too often under-qualified. Following on from this, the Institute of Employability Professionals has introduced qualifications in employability services along with Education Development International. A unified professional body for the careers profession, the Careers Development Institute, maintains a register of Career Development Professionals and a framework for professional development of careers advisors **in the UK**.

Qualifications in Career Development, such as those developed by the former sector skills council Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), are available at RQF levels 4, 5 and 6, but the Careers Profession Alliance's current voluntary registration requires a level 6 qualification for full registration. Qualifications at postgraduate level are also being developed.

Scottish Careers Advisors are required to hold a postgraduate qualification in career guidance and development in addition to an SDS training plan. Advisers in the Northern Ireland Careers Service similarly should possess a relevant postgraduate level qualification as well as a work-based qualification.

Careers advice services

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provides a Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service across **Scotland**. SDS works in partnership with education providers and job centres. Targets specified in the *More Choices, More Chances* strategy include young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training). SDS has also set up the My World of Work website containing CIAG resources. The Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce recommends incorporating careers advice before subject specialisation in secondary schools, to involve employers more closely with schools, educate teachers to provide comprehensive advice, and include career management skills in the curriculum.

In December 2017 the Careers Strategy for **England** was published. It sets out a long term plan to build a world class careers system that will help young people and adults choose the career that's right for them. The strategy has been developed in partnership with the Gatsby Charitable Foundation which has developed a set of benchmarks, based on rigorous national and international research, which define excellence in careers guidance (123). The strategy is co-ordinated through an expanded role for the Careers & Enterprise Company, working across all the Gatsby Benchmarks to help schools and colleges deliver the ambitions in the strategy.

The National Careers Service (NCS) provides advice on learning, training and employment for young people and adults in **England**. The service is delivered by local area based contractors who provide access to face-to-face and telephone advice to adults 19 years (or 18 if unemployed or in custody) and over. The NCS also comprise the National Careers Service Helpline (NCH), which offers web chat, text and telephone support to adults and young people, and National Careers Service website gives customers access to information and advice. The National Apprenticeship Service in **England** runs an Apprenticeship and a Traineeship Vacancy Service, which includes an online search function and mobile app.

Careers Wales offers an all age careers guidance service. The Welsh strategy for further development of careers services is outlined in *Future ambitions: Developing careers services in Wales* (124) . Careers Wales also maintains an Apprenticeship Matching Service available for employers and individual applicants.

The **Northern Ireland Careers Service** provides an all age, impartial careers education and guidance service to promote employment, education and training opportunities. Careers advisers operate throughout Northern Ireland from Job Centres, Jobs and Benefits Offices and stand-alone careers offices. The Careers Service also offers careers guidance via other channels such as telephone, email and webchat. Careers advisers use evidence outlined in the Department for the Economy's Skills Barometer to highlight the skills and qualifications most valued by employers and the sectors expected to experience employment growth, thus helping to balance skills supply and demand. Advisers also work with careers teachers in schools and further education colleges to provide impartial advice and guidance to pupils from 14-19. In Northern Ireland, careers education is a statutory area of learning in the common curriculum for all grant-aided post-primary schools. In addition, further education colleges and higher education institutions offer careers guidance to their students. The strategy for careers education and guidance in Northern Ireland, *Preparing for Success 2015-2020* which was published in March 2016 sets out a coherent and forward thinking strategic vision for the careers system in Northern Ireland (125) .

Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) is also offered in schools, colleges, higher education institutions and third sector bodies **across the UK**. Careers advice is available from trade unions as well and Unionlearn has developed their Strategy for Supporting Learners through their Union Learning Representatives, specifically targeting those who are disadvantaged in the workplace. Schools and colleges in **England** have a duty to provide access to independent careers guidance for pupils in school years 8 to 13 (ages 12-18) and for 19 to 25 year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Government funding for careers provision forms part of overall school and college budgets and it is left up to the discretion of the education provider how much is spent. Local authorities no longer have an obligation to provide careers guidance, but still have a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people to take part in education and training. Careers education and guidance is also provided by schools and colleges in Wales for students aged 14-19. The Careers and the World of Work Framework also forms part of the curriculum for 11-16 year-olds in maintained schools in Wales.

Jobcentre+ advisers work within schools in England to deliver impartial career advice intended to support schools in engaging young people (aged 12 to 18) identified as being at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) or who face potential disadvantage in the labour market. The initiative, known as the Pathfinder programme, will provide students with information on traineeships and apprenticeships, accessing work experience, the local labour market and soft skills that employers expect.

Ofsted's Learner View website allows FE college students in **England** to rate their college. The results are available for users to search and view to gather an indication of the performance of a college.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has added information about vocational courses and general careers advice to their website under the name UCAS Progress.

Please see also:

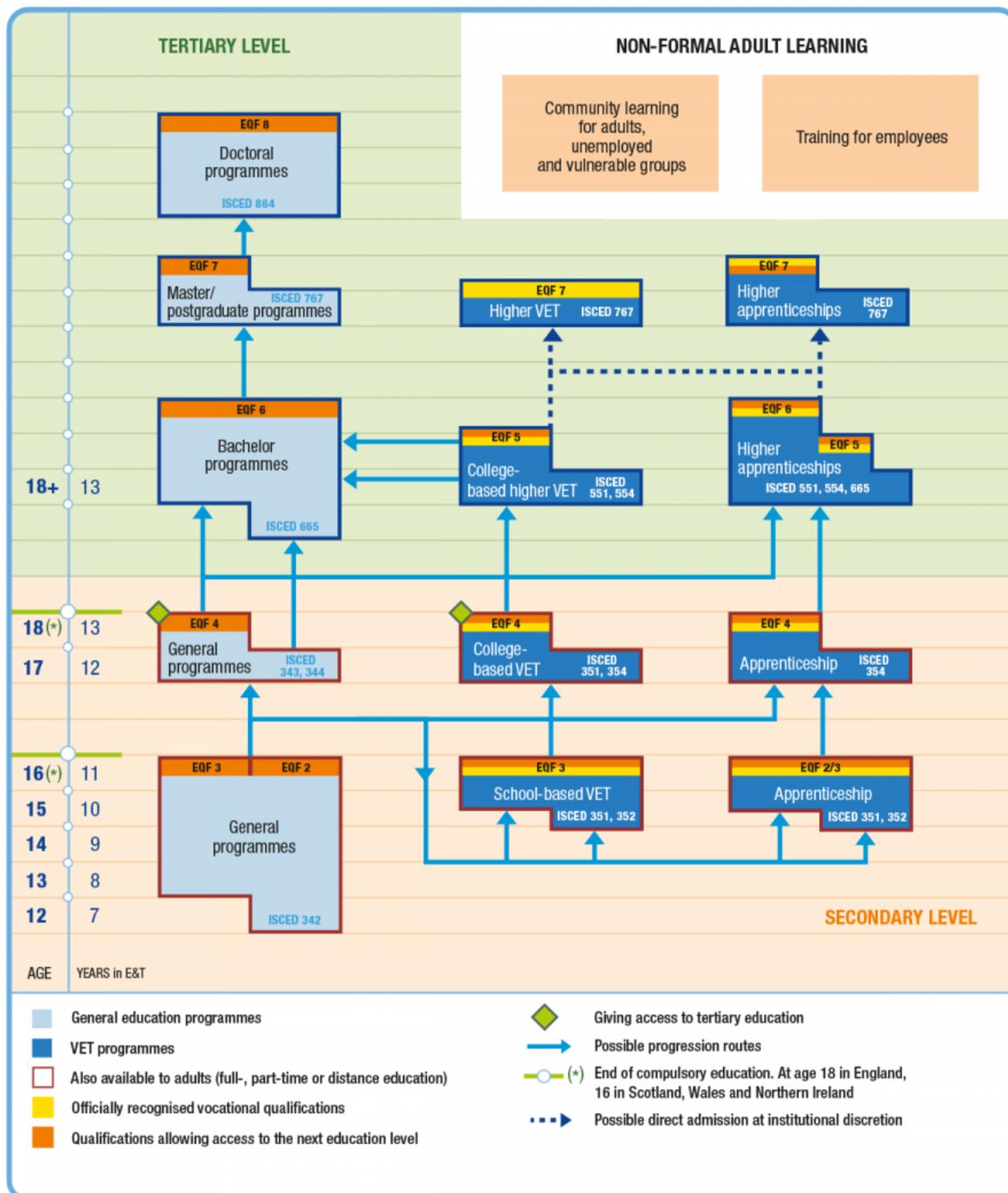
- guidance and outreach United Kingdom national report (126) ;
- Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - UK / Scotland (A2) ;
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit (127) ;
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices England (A1) ;
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices Northern Ireland (A2) ;
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices Wales (A3) .

[126] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic->

[perspectives/guidance-outreach](#)

- [127] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/resources-guidance/toolkit/where-can-you-find-more-information-in-your-country-and-elsewhere>

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011. ISCED classification based on the 2018 mapping of UK classifications by the Department for Education.
 Source: Cedefop and ReferNet UK, 2019.

VET Programme Types

EQF 2/3
Apprenticeship, ISCED 351,352

Apprenticeship programmes leading to EQF level 2 and 3, ISCED 351/352

EQF level	2/3	ISCED-P 2011 level	351, 352
Usual entry grade	10 (also available to adults)	Usual completion grade	11
Usual entry age	14	Usual completion age	16
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to) (128)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	 (129)
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	 (130)	Is it available for adults?	 Apprentices may complete this type of study at age 16, but many apprentices are adult learners who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

ECVET or other credits Information not available (131)

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both

- on-the-job; and
- off-the-job.

Off-the-job learning may be organised

- as one or two days per week at an education and training provider; or
- through longer, less frequent blocks of learning;
- evening classes are also offered.

Learning options

Apprenticeships at this level in **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks (132) .

In **England** (133) , new apprenticeship standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.

Scottish Modern apprenticeships include a work contract and are required to include as mandatory components SVQs (134) or alternative competence based qualifications and Work Place Core Skills that comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others.

Main providers	Colleges, independent training providers.
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	<p><=80%</p> <p>The programme is delivered as apprenticeship (minimum 20% - one day a week for a full time apprentice- is 'off the job' training)</p>
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on-the-job apprenticeship training

Main target groups Programmes are available for young people and also for adults. Apprenticeship programmes at this level have different target groups depending on the programme:

Traineeships in **England** are designed to provide young, unemployed people who possess little work experience and low qualifications with skills and work experience in preparation for apprenticeships and employment. The core content comprises literacy and numeracy, work preparation training and a work placement. This programme is tailored to individual candidates' needs and should be completed in less than six months.

Traineeships are being introduced in **Northern Ireland** at EQF level 3 and will allow progression to RQF level 3 (EQF 4) apprenticeships. A baccalaureate-style curriculum is being created, which will include work-based learning and allow students to continue into an apprenticeship or further education or be skilled enough to find sustained employment.

Scottish learning providers offer additional skills and employability training opportunities, through the Employability Fund that prepare young people for Modern Apprenticeships or employment. Training is targeted towards seven key sectors and programmes include employability skills, basic occupational skills, employer experience and lead to a recognised vocational qualification or certification (135) .

Traineeships are available for 16-18 year olds in **Wales** and provide needs-based training to help learners progress to further learning, apprenticeships and employment through provision at three levels.

Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age) Apprentices may complete this type of study at age 16, but many apprentices are adult learners who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework/standard. Competition for some apprenticeship places is fierce and good secondary qualifications at EQF level 3 in English and mathematics are sometimes necessary.

Assessment of learning outcomes Qualifications offered within Scottish and Welsh apprenticeship frameworks and in the apprenticeship frameworks that include QCF qualifications in England and Northern Ireland (136) , are unit-based which enables credit transfer.

The new apprenticeship standards in England are; however, not unit-based and are assessed through a final examination, which makes the process of credit transfer more dependent on the discretion of the learning provider.

Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>Apprenticeships at this level are called:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intermediate apprenticeships (RQF); • foundation apprenticeships (CQFW); and • modern apprenticeships (SCQF). <p>An apprenticeship certificate (137) is awarded along with a vocational qualification, such as BTEC First Awards, Certificates and Diplomas, NVQs and SVQs (138) .</p>
Examples of qualifications	Bricklayer, motor vehicle technician and legal secretary
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Apprenticeship programmes and VET qualifications at this level usually provide entry to the labour market and whilst apprenticeships are linked to a profession (139) , not all qualifications are linked to an occupational standard.</p> <p>Some apprenticeships at this level provide the first step towards a more narrowly defined apprenticeship or training programme at a more advanced level.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	<p> Apprenticeships in England (140) , Wales and Northern Ireland are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks which include a work contract, a formal technical/occupational qualification and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs in English, mathematics; and • other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile. <p>Traineeships in England:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the core content comprises literacy and numeracy (141) .
Key competences	<p>Scottish learning providers offer additional skills and employability training opportunities, through the Employability Fund that prepare young people for Modern Apprenticeships or employment. Training is targeted towards seven key sectors (142) and programmes include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employability skills (143) . <p>Scottish Modern apprenticeships include (144) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work place core skills that comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others.
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners Information not available

- [131] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en
- [132] Which include a work contract, a formal technical/occupational qualification and Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs in English, mathematics and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.
- [133] New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employer-led consortia (Trailblazer groups); see Section: VET governance/apprenticeships in England.
- [134] Scottish vocational qualification.
- [135] Qualifications vary depending on the needs of the person and the local area, more information at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/employability-skills/employability-fund/>
- [136] Level descriptors have been revised, but the same eight framework levels remain from the previous qualifications and credit framework (QCF), and the existing qualifications continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation.
- [137] Attesting that the qualification was delivered as part of an apprenticeship programme
- [138] National vocational qualifications and Scottish vocational qualifications.
- [139] Such as bricklayer, motor vehicle technician and legal secretary.
- [140] New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employer-led consortia (Trailblazer groups); see Section: VET governance/apprenticeships in England.
- [141] The programme is tailored to individual candidates' needs and should be completed in less than six months.
- [142] Programmes lead to a recognised vocational qualification or certification. Qualifications vary depending on the needs of the person and the local area, more information at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/employability-skills/employability-fund/>
- [143] As well as basic occupational skills, and employer experience.
- [144] In addition to a work contract and SVQs Scottish vocational qualifications as mandatory components, or alternative competence based qualifications and employability skills.

EQF 3

School-based VET,

ISCED 351, 352

School-based VET programmes leading to EQF level 3, ISCED 351, 352

EQF level	3	ISCED-P 2011 level	351, 352
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	12
Usual entry age	14	Usual completion age	16
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to) (145)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	 (146)
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	 For learners up to 18, VET is funded by government agencies.	Is it available for adults?	 The programme is also available in adult education/continuing training.
ECVET or other credits	Information not available (147)		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	VET learning options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full-time school-based learning; • part-time in adult/continuing education; • school-based programme in conjunction with an apprenticeship. VET learning options per qualification type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC Firsts (RQF level 2 qualifications) (148) are often studied part-time and in conjunction with other qualifications; • National vocational qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish vocational qualifications (SVQs) are often taken by employed people or in conjunction with an apprenticeships; also available in college settings; GCSEs (149) in vocational subjects can normally be studied alongside general academic subjects.		

Main providers	Colleges, secondary schools
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Information not available
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school workshops; • in-company training; • on-the-job apprenticeship training (150) .
Main target groups	<p>VET programmes may be taken as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternatives to compulsory general academic study at secondary schools; or • as stand-alone qualifications completed after moving sideways from secondary school to starting VET at a college; • adults may also start VET at this level. <p>In Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Certificates are primarily aimed at people in full-time education and National Progression Awards are usually shorter, more flexible programmes for employees or people returning to work, though are also taken as part of a wider curriculum of qualifications within the school or college setting.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<p>No specific entry requirements apply.</p> <p>Students may complete this type of VET at age 15/16. Age 16 marks the end of the compulsory schooling age, although the age to which individuals are required to take part in education or training, either part-time or full-time, was raised in England to 18 in 2015 in a bid to improve the skill levels of the work force.</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	Information not available
Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level (see also Section VET governance):</p> <p>In England, Northern Ireland and Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) Awards, Certificates and Diplomas (151) ; • the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in vocational subjects. <p>In Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) (152) ; • SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications); • National Certificates (vocational qualifications); • NPAs (National Progression Awards) (vocational qualifications).
Examples of qualifications	Heating and ventilation engineer, motor vehicle technician, care worker (153)

Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Qualifications at this level may provide entry to the labour market in professions such as heating and ventilation engineer, motor vehicle technician or care worker, but are not all linked to an occupational standard and are mostly intended to prepare students for further vocational specialisation at a higher level.</p> <p>In Scotland, National Progression Awards are National Qualifications Group Awards that allow entry to more advanced study and employment.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	<p>✓</p> <p>GCSEs in vocational subjects can normally be studied alongside general academic subjects.</p>
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	<p>✓</p> <p>Qualifications frameworks in England and the devolved administrations (154) describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours.</p> <p>Qualifications included in the RQF (Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland in place since 2015) have, from 31 December 2017, been described in terms of total qualification time (155) as credit allocation to units and qualifications is not compulsory within the RQF.</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. While NVQs sit within the RQF and CQFW, SVQs sit within the SCQF.</p>
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[147] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en

[148] BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) qualifications are offered in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. For a detailed description of the BTEC Firsts, see: Pearson. [About BTEC Firsts](#) [accessed 15.2.2018].

[149] General certificate of secondary education.

[150] All the options listed may all be included in programmes of this type, but the inclusion and amount depends on the programme.

- [151] See also Pearson: [What is a BTEC?](#) [accessed 15.2.2019].
- [152] National qualifications are offered in both vocational and academic subjects.
- [153] Qualifications not all linked to an occupational standard.
- [154] Credit and qualifications framework in Wales (CQFW), Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) and the previous qualifications and credit framework in Northern Ireland (QCF).
- [155] Ofqual (2015). [Total qualification time criteria](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

EQF 4

Apprenticeship

ISCED 354

Apprenticeship programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354.

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	12 (also available to adults)	Usual completion grade	13
Usual entry age	17	Usual completion age	18
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to) (156)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 (in England)  (in N. Ireland, Wales and Scotland) Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England)	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	 (157)	Is it available for adults?	 Apprentices may complete this type of study at age 18, but many apprentices are adult learners who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

ECVET or other credits Information not available (158)

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both

- on-the-job; and
- off-the-job.

Off-the-job learning may be organised:

- as one or two days per week at an education and training provider; or
- through longer, less frequent blocks of learning;
- evening classes are also offered.

Learning options

Apprenticeships in **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks (159)

In **England** (160) , new apprenticeship standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.

Scottish Modern apprenticeships include a work contract and are required to include as mandatory components SVQs- Scottish Vocational Qualification or alternative competence based qualifications and Work Place Core Skills that comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others.

Scottish young people on Foundation apprenticeships

- are not employed;
- spend time in school and on work placements (approximately one day per week);
- Successful students may transfer to a modern apprenticeship on completion.

Main providers	Colleges, independent training providers
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	<p><=80%</p> <p>The programme is delivered as apprenticeship (minimum 20% - one day a week for a full time apprentice- is 'off the job' training)</p> <p>Information not available.</p>
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on-the-job apprenticeship training
Main target groups	<p>Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.</p> <p>Apprentices may complete this type of study at age 18, but many apprentices are adult learners who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.</p>

Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<p>Most pupils take examinations for the GCSE (161) at age 15/16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The grades achieved here play an important role in determining the future study opportunities within VET.</p> <p>In Scotland, National 4 and 5 qualifications (EQF 2/3), normally also taken at age 15/16, are the most common entrance qualifications to VET.</p> <p>Entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework/standard. Competition for some apprenticeship places is fierce and good secondary qualifications at EQF level 3 in English and mathematics are sometimes necessary.</p> <p>Aligned with the Scottish Government's policy agenda of <i>Developing the Young Workforce</i>, Foundation apprenticeships have been created to offer school pupils (at EQF level 4) the chance to undertake some components of a Modern apprenticeship in Scotland whilst still in school studying other subjects like National 5s and Highers. These apprenticeships are linked to key sectors of the Scottish economy, so young people are getting industry experience which will help them kick-start a successful career in their chosen field.</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>Qualifications offered within Scottish and Welsh apprenticeship frameworks and in the apprenticeship frameworks that include QCF qualifications in England and Northern Ireland (162) , are unit-based which enables credit transfer.</p> <p>The new apprenticeship standards in England are; however, not unit-based and are assessed through a final examination, which makes the process of credit transfer more dependent on the discretion of the learning provider.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>Apprenticeships at this level are called:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 apprenticeships; • advanced apprenticeships; and • in Scotland: foundation apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships. <p>An apprenticeship certificate (163) is awarded along with a vocational qualification, such as BTEC National Awards, Certificates and Diplomas along with NVQs and SVQs (164) .</p>
Examples of qualifications	<p>Electrician, veterinary nurse and dental technician.</p>
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Apprenticeship programmes and VET qualifications at this level are designed to provide entry to the labour market and are linked to a profession.</p> <p>Progression opportunities to higher apprenticeship or training programmes at a more advanced level also exist.</p> <p>Entry to first level university degree study is also possible depending on the qualifications achieved.</p>

Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	<p>✓</p> <p>Apprenticeships in England (165) , Wales and Northern Ireland are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks which include a work contract, a formal technical/occupational qualification and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs in English, mathematics; and • other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.
Key competences	<p>Scottish learning providers offer additional skills and employability training opportunities, through the Employability Fund that prepare young people for Modern Apprenticeships or employment. Training is targeted towards seven key sectors (166) and programmes include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employability skills (167) . <p>Scottish Modern apprenticeships include (168)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work place core skills that comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others.
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[158] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en

[159] Which include a work contract, a formal technical/occupational qualification and Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs in English, mathematics and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

[160] New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employer-led consortia (Trailblazer groups); see Section: VET governance/apprenticeships in England.

[161] General certificate of secondary education.

[162] Level descriptors have been revised, but the same eight framework levels remain from the previous qualifications and credit framework (QCF), and the existing qualifications continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation.

[163] Attesting that the qualification was delivered as part of an apprenticeship programme.

[164] National vocational qualifications and Scottish vocational qualifications.

[165] New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employer-led consortia (Trailblazer groups); see Section: VET governance/apprenticeships in England

[166] Programmes lead to a recognised vocational qualification or certification. Qualifications

vary depending on the needs of the person and the local area, more information at:
<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/employability-skills/employability-fund/>

- [167] As well as basic occupational skills, and employer experience.
- [168] In addition to a work contract and SVQs Scottish vocational qualifications as mandatory components, or alternative competence based qualifications and employability skills.

EQF 4

College-based VET

ISCED 351, 354

College-based VET programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 351, 354

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	351, 354
Usual entry grade	12	Usual completion grade	13
Usual entry age	17	Usual completion age	18
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to) (169)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 (in England)  (in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland) Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	 For learners up to 18, VET is funded by government agencies.	Is it available for adults?	 The programme is also available in adult education/continuing training.
ECVET or other credits	Information not available (170)		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

VET learning options include:

- full-time school-based learning;
- part-time in adult/continuing education;
- school-based programme in conjunction with an apprenticeship.

VET learning options per qualification type:

- BTEC Nationals are often studied part-time and in conjunction with other qualifications;
- SVQs/NVQs (171) are often taken by employed people or in conjunction with an apprenticeship, but are also available in college settings.

VET learning options

In England, 16-19 year olds are expected to follow a 16-19 study programme consisting of a main vocational qualification (or general academic qualification) and including work-related learning as well as English and mathematics, unless the required level has already been achieved in these two subjects.

Qualifications taught in **England** at RQF level 3 may be categorised as either technical or applied general qualifications. Qualifications receiving sufficient endorsements from employers and trade and professional associations are categorised as Tech levels (Technical level qualifications as a mark of quality and relevance to the labour market. Applied general qualifications provide a broader study of a vocational area, and need the public backing of three universities to achieve the quality mark. Students completing a study programme started in 2014 or later that includes one of the Tech levels, a level 3 core mathematics qualification and an extended project will achieve the Technical Baccalaureate (172) .

The **Welsh** Baccalaureate contains academic and vocational qualifications alongside a wider programme of learning that includes an individual project and three challenges that enable young people to develop critical skills including problem solving and creativity. This programme comprises literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation and personal effectiveness, as well as general academic and/or vocational qualifications in addition to the skills challenges that require learners to demonstrate research skills, entrepreneurship and participate in community activities.

Main providers Colleges, secondary schools

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies Information not available

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)

- school workshops;
- in-company training;
- on-the-job apprenticeship training (173) .

Main target groups VET programmes may be taken as:

- alternatives to compulsory general academic study at secondary schools; or
- as stand-alone qualifications completed after moving sideways from secondary school to starting VET at a college;
- adults may also start VET at this level.

Target groups and education strategies in place:

The 'Opportunities for All' pledge offers a guaranteed place in education or training for 16-19 year olds in **Scotland**.

In **Northern Ireland**, a guarantee of training towards level 1-3 qualifications (EQF levels 2-4) is offered through the Training for Success programme for all unemployed 16-17 year old school leavers with extended eligibility for those with a disability and from an in-care background.

The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training includes a policy commitment for the future system that all 16-24 year olds who require training at level 2 (EQF 3) will have the opportunity to participate.

Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)

Most pupils take examinations for the GCSE (174) at age 15/16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The grades achieved here play an important role in determining the future study opportunities within VET.

In Scotland, National 4 and 5 qualifications (EQF levels 2/3), normally also taken at age 15/16, are the most common entrance qualifications to VET.

Students may complete this type of VET at age 18/19. Age 16 marks the end of the compulsory schooling age, although the age to which individuals are required to take part in education or training, either part-time or full-time, was raised in England to 18 in 2015.

Assessment of learning outcomes

Information not available

Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level (see also section VET governance):</p> <p>In England, Northern Ireland and Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) National Awards, Certificates and Diplomas; • NVQs (National vocational qualifications); • applied subjects at upper secondary level are also available in the General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) and Advanced Subsidiary programmes and the Welsh Baccalaureate. <p>In Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Progression Awards; • National Certificates; • Professional Development Awards; • SVQs (Scottish vocational qualifications); • National Qualifications, such as Higher and Advanced Higher are offered primarily in academic, but also some vocational subjects.
Examples of qualifications	<p>Electrician, veterinary nurse, dental technician.</p>
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Candidates holding RQF level 3 (175) or SCQF level 6 vocational qualifications (EQF level 4) may be allowed access to selected first cycle university programmes at institutional discretion.</p> <p>The Curriculum for Excellence (176) in Scotland creates opportunities for students to combine a wider range of qualification types, which means that a larger variety of secondary qualifications are used to apply for tertiary education.</p> <p>Vocational RQF qualifications at level 3 that are classified as Applied General qualifications are designed to provide a clear route from vocational education to higher education in England.</p> <p>The majority of young university entrants in England, Wales and Northern Ireland hold general academic A level (RQF/CQFW level 3) (177) qualifications (178) , but recent years have seen a steady rise in applicants being accepted with only vocational qualifications and a mixture of academic and vocational qualifications (179) .</p> <p>In Scotland, the majority of young university entrants will hold Scottish Higher qualifications (SCQF level 6 / EQF level 4). However, the final report of the Commission on Widening Access in 2016 recommended that the admissions processes of post-16 institutions recognise alternative pathways to higher education and do not unnecessarily disadvantage those who choose them, and that by 2018 a Framework for Fair Access should be published (180) . This was published in May 2019 (181) .</p>
Destination of graduates	<p>Information not available</p>

Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	<p>✓</p> <p>(182) (183)</p> <p>In England, 16-19 study programmes include English and mathematics, unless the required level has already been achieved in these two subjects.</p> <p>In England, RQF level 3 Tech level (quality mark) qualifications include level 3 core mathematics.</p> <p>The Welsh Bacculaureate includes general academic qualifications.</p>
Key competences	<p>The Welsh Bacculaureate comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy, • numeracy, • digital literacy, • critical thinking and problem-solving, • planning and organisation, • creativity and innovation, • personal effectiveness, and • entrepreneurship.
Application of learning outcomes approach	<p>✓</p> <p>Qualifications frameworks in England and the devolved administrations (184) describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours.</p> <p>Qualifications included in the RQF (Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland in place since 2015) have, from 31 December 2017, been described in terms of total qualification time (185) as credit allocation to units and qualifications is not compulsory within the RQF.</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. While NVQs sit within the RQF and CQFW, SVQs sit within the SCQF.</p>
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[170] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en

[171] Scottish vocational qualifications / national vocational qualifications.

[172] See also Department for Education (2014). [The Technical Bacculaureate Performance Table Measure](#)

- [173] All the options listed may all be included in programmes of this type, but the inclusion and amount depends on the programme. BTEC and NVQ/SVQ programmes combine theoretical and practical vocational education and can form part of an apprenticeship programme.
- [174] General certificate of secondary education.
- [175] RQF levels are still to be referenced to EQF levels.
 - 'An update on developments in England and Northern Ireland was presented in the EQF advisory group in February 2019, and an updated referencing report to reference the RQF and FHEQ to the EQF is planned to be presented in June 2019'. Source: Cedefop (2019). *European inventory on NQF (2018) UK- England and N. Ireland*, p.16. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf
 - 'An updated referencing report has been prepared by the SCQF Partnership and presented to the EQF advisory group in December 2018.' Source: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_scotland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf p. 14.
 - 'Wales is currently in the process of updating the referencing report due to the changes in the level descriptors, the creation of Qualification Wales and the changes to quality assurance in higher education. This report will be presented to the EQF advisory group in June 2019.' Source: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_wales_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf p. 15.
- [176] See also: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/school-curriculum/>
- [177] CQFW level 3 are referenced to EQF level 4, RQF levels are still to be referenced to EQF levels.
- [178] RQF levels are still to be referenced to EQF levels.
 - 'An update on developments in England and Northern Ireland was presented in the EQF advisory group in February 2019, and an updated referencing report to reference the RQF and FHEQ to the EQF is planned to be presented in June 2019'. Source: Cedefop (2019). *European inventory on NQF (2018) UK- England and N. Ireland*, p.16. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf
 - 'An updated referencing report has been prepared by the SCQF Partnership and presented to the EQF advisory group in December 2018.' Source: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_scotland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf p. 14.
 - 'Wales is currently in the process of updating the referencing report due to the changes in the level descriptors, the creation of Qualification Wales and the changes to quality assurance in higher education. This report will be presented to the EQF advisory group in June 2019.' Source: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_wales_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2018.pdf p. 15.
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- [180] Scottish Government (2016b). [The final report of the Commission on Widening Access](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].
- [181] Scottish Government (2019). [Fair access framework](#). [accessed 4.6.2019].
- [182] BTEC and NVQs do not include general subjects.
- [183] See more on the study programmes curriculum under Section: Assessment of learning outcomes, above.
- [184] Credit and qualifications framework in Wales (CQFW), Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) and the previous qualifications and credit framework in Northern

Ireland (QCF).

[185] Ofqual (2015). [Total qualification time criteria](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

EQF 5, 6

Higher apprenticeships

ISCED 551, 554, 665

Higher apprenticeships leading to EQF level 5 and 6, ISCED 551, 554, 665

EQF level	5, 6	ISCED-P 2011 level	551, 554, 665
Usual entry grade	13	Usual completion grade	18 (16 in Scotland)
Usual entry age	18	Usual completion age	24 (22 in Scotland)
Length of a programme (years)	1 – 6 (1-4 in Scotland) (186)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	 Programmes are accessible to learners over 18.
ECVET or other credits	Information not available (187)		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both:

- on-the-job; and
- off-the-job.

Off-the-job learning may be organised:

- as one or two days per week at an education and training provider; or
- through longer, less frequent blocks of learning;
- evening classes are also offered.

Learning options

Higher Apprenticeships in **England, Wales** and **Northern Ireland** are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks (188) .

In **England**, new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2017/18 are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations.

Scottish Modern apprenticeships include:

- a work contract;
- SVQs (as mandatory components) or alternative competence based qualifications; and
- Work Place Core Skills that comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others;
- Sectors may decide to include other qualifications, such as HNCs/HNDs or other vocational qualifications either as a mandatory or optional enhancement.

Scottish Technical and Professional apprenticeships do not include Work Place Core Skills; rather they include a range of SVQ units designated as career skills. Technical and Professional apprenticeships may include work-based qualifications other than SVQs (or alternative competence based qualifications) such as SQA HNDs or professional qualifications as the mandatory qualification.

Main providers	Colleges, independent training providers, universities
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	=80% The programme is delivered as apprenticeship (minimum 20% - one day a week for a full-time apprentice- is 'off the job' training).
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on-the-job apprenticeship training;
Main target groups	Higher apprenticeships are for adult (18+) learners, many of whom may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)

Entry to these non-degree higher education qualifications are usually based on possession of an EQF level 4 qualification from school or college in either vocational or academic subject areas. Entry is allowed at the discretion of the college guided by the awarding body.

Specific entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework/standard.

Degree apprenticeships (in **Scotland**: Higher and Graduate apprenticeships) create a different pathway to obtaining university degrees. Whilst academic ability, including grades and numerical and reasoning skills are considered by the university or college, candidates are also interviewed for a job with a company (unless they are already employed with the company). Both employers and universities must be satisfied the applicant meets their respective requirements. There may therefore be a joint recruitment process.

Assessment of learning outcomes

Assessment of framework Higher apprenticeships (see Section 18. LEARNING FORM): In **England**, new apprenticeship standards currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning and are linked to specific occupations. Apprentices are continually assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training. Apprentices also undergo end-point assessment via a government-approved end point assessment organisation.

Assessment of Scottish Modern apprenticeships (see Section 18. LEARNING FORM): In Scotland, end-point assessment is not mandatory for Scottish Modern Apprenticeships. As Scottish Modern Apprenticeships are offered across a broad range of sectors, the format of the training and assessment varies considerably across the apprenticeships available.

Assessment of Technical and Professional apprenticeships (see Section 18. LEARNING FORM): As with the Scottish Modern Apprenticeships, for the Technical and Professional apprenticeships end-point assessment is not mandatory for Scottish Modern Apprenticeships. The format of the training and assessment varies considerably across the apprenticeships available.

Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>Apprenticeships at this level are called:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher apprenticeships, • higher level apprenticeships, • degree apprenticeships, • graduate apprenticeships, • professional apprenticeship, • technical apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships. <p>A certificate may be awarded along with a vocational qualification, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation degree; • BTEC Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, along with NVQs and SVQs. <p>Degree and professional apprenticeships result in the award of a Bachelor degree (EQF 6).</p>
Examples of qualifications	Economist, project manager, quantity surveyor (189) .
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>There are good articulation options for progression from higher VET programmes at RQF levels 4 and 5/SCQF levels 7 and 8 (EQF level 5), such as HNC and HNDs, to the second or third year of a Bachelor degree in a related field in the UK.</p> <p>However, admission and transfer arrangements are made at the discretion of the admitting institution. See VET programme box 'College-based higher VET for information about progression opportunities in Scotland.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland all Higher level apprenticeship opportunities must offer a linear progression pathway from EQF Level 4 to 5 to 6 to 7, either to further vocational learning, or to part-time provision.</p> <p>Possession of a Bachelor degree allows entry to postgraduate programmes at universities and other qualifications at EQF level 7.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	information not available
General education subjects	<p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Apprenticeships in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks (190) and include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general subjects relevant to the occupational profile
Key competences	<p>Scottish Modern apprenticeship include (see also learning options in section 18)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Place Core Skills comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others.

Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[187] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en

[188] Which include a work contract, a technical/occupational qualification within the RQF/CQFW and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

[189] UCAS: *Find a Job* (Apprenticeships: Degree/Higher): <https://careerfinder.ucas.com/jobs/degree/#browsing> [accessed 11.6.19].

[190] A work contract, a formal technical/occupational qualification.

EQF 5

College-based

higher VET

ISCED 551, 554

College-based higher VET leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 551, 554

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	551, 554
Usual entry grade	13	Usual completion grade	15
Usual entry age	18	Usual completion age	20
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to) (191)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	 The programme is also available in adult education/continuing training.
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	 Learners entering these programmes are over 18.

ECVET or other credits Information not available (192)

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

VET learning options include:

- full-time school-based learning;
- part-time in adult/continuing education;
- classroom-based programme in conjunction with an apprenticeship.

VET learning options per qualification type:

- BTEC/SQA (193) Higher Nationals are often studied part-time;
- SVQs/NVQs are often taken by employed people or in conjunction with an apprenticeship, but are also available in college settings.

Main providers Colleges

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Information not available
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops; • in-company training; • on-the-job apprenticeship training (194) .
Main target groups	<p>Vocational study at this level encompasses stand-alone qualifications for applicants aged 18+.</p> <p>These study programmes may also be completed by employees looking for career progression.</p>
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<p>Entry to these non-degree higher education qualifications are usually based on possession of an EQF level 4 qualification from school or college in either vocational or academic subject areas.</p> <p>Entry is allowed at the discretion of the college guided by the awarding body.</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	Information not available
Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level (195)]]</p> <p>In England, Northern Ireland and Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC Higher Certificates and Diplomas; • NVQs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. <p>In Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Progression Awards; • National Certificates; • Professional Development Awards; • SVQs in Scotland.
Examples of qualifications	Quantity surveyor, education administrator, paramedic.

Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>There are good articulation options for progression from higher VET programmes at RQF levels 4 and 5/SCQF levels 7 and 8 (EQF level 5), such as Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND), to the second or third year of a Bachelor degree in a related field in the UK.</p> <p>However, admission and transfer arrangements are made at the discretion of the admitting institution, though in Scotland the Government and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) have provided strategic funding to help build more substantive and sustained articulation arrangements through the use of regional 'articulation hubs'. This funding and the hubs are no longer in place, but universities and tertiary colleges have built into their Outcome Agreements with the SFC (196) the requirement to sustain and ideally increase such articulation activity. This is also supported by recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access set up by the Scottish Government, with a Commissioner on Fair Access in place to help drive such activity.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	<p>✓</p> <p>Qualifications frameworks in England and the devolved administrations (197) describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours.</p> <p>Qualifications included in the RQF (Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland in place since 2015) have, from 31 December 2017, been described in terms of total qualification time (198) as credit allocation to units and qualifications is not compulsory within the RQF.</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. While NVQs sit within the RQF and CQFW, SVQs sit within the SCQF.</p>
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[192] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en

[193] Scottish Qualifications Authority.

- [194] All the options listed may all be included in programmes of this type, but the inclusion and amount depends on the programme.
- [195] See also Main vocational qualifications offered in the UK under Section 6. VET within education and training system
- [196] <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/outcome-agreements/outcome-agreements.aspx>
- [197] Credit and qualifications framework in Wales (CQFW), Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) and the previous qualifications and credit framework in Northern Ireland (QCF).
- [198] Ofqual (2015). [*Total qualification time criteria*](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

EQF 7

Higher apprenticeships

ISCED 767

Higher apprenticeships leading to EQF level 7, ISCED 767. Higher apprenticeships at Doctoral level have not yet been developed.

EQF level	7	ISCED-P 2011 level	767
Usual entry grade	Information not available	Usual completion grade	Information not available
Usual entry age	Information not available	Usual completion age	Information not available
Length of a programme (years)	1 (up to) (199)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	Information not available	Is it available for adults?	 Learners in these programmes are over 18.
ECVET or other credits	Information not available (200)		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both

- on-the-job; and
- off-the-job.

Off-the-job learning may be organised

- as one or two days per week at an education and training provider; or
- through longer, less frequent blocks of learning;
- evening classes are also offered.

Learning options

Higher Apprenticeships in **England**, and **Wales** are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks (201) .

Higher level apprenticeships frameworks in **Northern Ireland** consist of an academic element, which contains a strong work-based element, combined with on-the-job training, and may include technical work-based qualifications as appropriate.

In **England**, new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2017/18 are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations.

Scottish apprenticeships include a work contract. Technical and Professional apprenticeships include career skills and may include work-based or alternative competence based qualifications or professional qualifications as the mandatory qualification.

Main providers Colleges and higher education institutions

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies Work-based learning and in-company training are included in programmes of this type, but the amount depends on the programme.

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)

- on-the-job apprenticeship training;

Main target groups Higher apprenticeships are for adult learners, who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age) Degree apprenticeships were introduced to create a different pathway to obtaining university degrees. Whilst academic ability, including grades and numerical and reasoning skills are considered by the university or college, candidates are also interviewed for a job with a company (unless they are already employed with the company). Both employers and universities must be satisfied the applicant meets their respective requirements. There may therefore be a joint recruitment process.

Assessment of learning outcomes	Assessment of Higher apprenticeships (see Section 18. LEARNING FORM): Higher Apprenticeships have end-point assessment, where apprenticeships are assessment on both their academic learning and occupational competences.
Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>Apprenticeships at this level are called:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher apprenticeships; • higher level apprenticeships; • graduate apprenticeships; • degree apprenticeships; and • professional apprenticeships. <p>An apprenticeship certificate may be awarded along with a Master's degree.</p>
Examples of qualifications	Information not available
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Higher apprenticeships at Doctoral level have not yet been developed.</p> <p>Possession of a Master's degree awarded from a university with degree awarding powers in the UK allows progression to Doctoral study in the UK at institutional discretion.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	<p></p> <p>Technical and professional apprenticeships include career skills.</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[200] https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/the-european-credit-system-for-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet_en

[201] Which include a work contract, a technical/occupational qualification within the RQF/CQFW and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

EQF 7

Higher VET

ISCED 767

Higher VET leading to EQF 7, ISCED 767

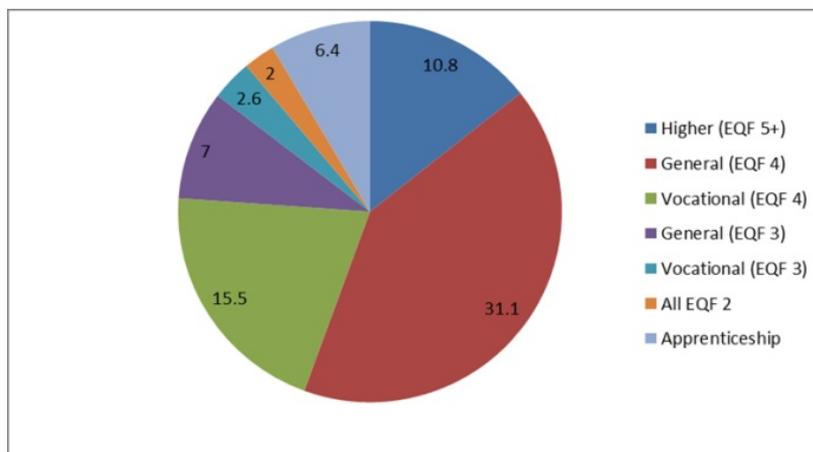
EQF level	7	ISCED-P 2011 level	767
Usual entry grade	Information not available	Usual completion grade	Information not available
Usual entry age	Information not available	Usual completion age	Information not available
Length of a programme (years)	1 (up to) (202)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Education is compulsory up to 16 (18 in England).	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	 The programme is also available in adult education/continuing training.
Is it available for adults?	 Learners in these programmes are over 18.		
ECVET or other credits	Information not available (203)		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes are often studied part-time by employed people, but are also available in college settings that include work experience. • Courses are often also offered through distance learning. 		
Main providers	Colleges and higher education institutions		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Work-based learning and in-company training are included in programmes of this type, but the amount depends on the programme.		
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops; • in-company training. Many students will be in employment whilst studying.		

Main target groups	These study programmes are, in the main, completed by employees looking for career progression and to improve professional practice.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<p>Entry to these non-degree higher education qualifications are usually based on possession of a university degree or other non-degree higher qualifications. Work experience in a related subject is often also taken into consideration.</p> <p>Entry is allowed at the discretion of the college guided by the awarding body.</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	Information not available
Diplomas/certificates provided	A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level, including BTEC Professional qualifications, such as Extended Level 7 Diplomas along with NVQs (National vocational qualifications) and SVQs (Scottish vocational qualifications).
Examples of qualifications	Information not available
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	These study programmes are, in the main, completed by employees looking for career progression and to improve professional practice.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
General education subjects	General subjects are not usually included as the programmes are narrowly specialised to meet the skills demands of a specific profession.
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	<p>✓</p> <p>Qualifications frameworks in England and the devolved administrations (204) describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours.</p> <p>Qualifications included in the RQF (Regulated qualifications framework in England and N. Ireland in place since 2015) have, from 31 December 2017, been described in terms of total qualification time (205) as credit allocation to units and qualifications is not compulsory within the RQF.</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. While NVQs sit within the RQF and CQFW, SVQs sit within the SCQF.</p>

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners

1 605 000 students in **England** in the 16-18 age group participated in education and training at various levels in 2017, which accounts for 86% of all young people in this age group.

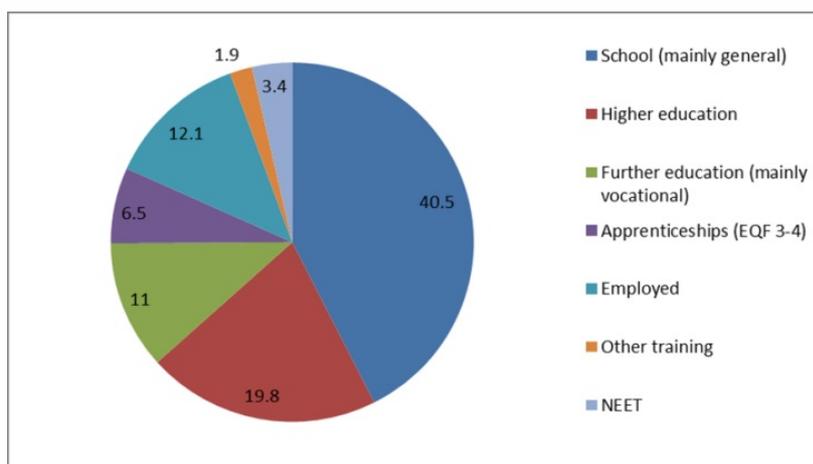
Participation of 16-18 year olds in education and training in England in 2017 (%)



Source: Department for Education (2018). [Participation in education, training and employment: 2017](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

50 500 students in **Scotland** in the 16-19 age group participated in education at various levels in 2018, which accounts for 71% of all young people in this age group. Apprenticeship and non-formal and informal training are not included in this number.

Participation of 16-19 year olds in education and training in Scotland in 2018 (%)



Source: Skills Development Scotland (2018). [Annual Participation Measure for 16 - 19 year olds in Scotland 2018](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

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