

---

# The Dragon, The Thistle and The Shamrock



Ben Kibble-Smith - Group Chair for HELOA Wales, Wrexham University

Vicky Bannerman - Group Chair for HELOA Scotland, University of Strathclyde



**Croeso!**

**Fàilte!**

**Fáilte!**

---

## What do you already know?

Based on the flag on your table, write down what you know about:

- Qualifications
- Student Finance System
- HEI Provision
- Language spoken
- Fun facts/Myths



# Education in Wales / Addysg yng Nghymru

Students can study qualifications through Welsh or English

No academies, free schools nor state grammar schools

**GCSEs** are the main general qualifications taken by 16-year-old learners in Wales, including Welsh and Welsh as a second language, but grading scales remain **A\* to G**

**Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A) levels** are the main general qualifications at Level 3 and are usually taken at age 16-19 (other qualifications are available)

A new trend in Wales, in areas such as Wrexham and Torfaen, smaller high schools have been reduced to enable larger colleges, often across multiple regions. For example, in Wrexham there is one college (Coleg Cambria), one Welsh Medium 6th Form and one rural 6th left.

T-Levels are not yet operated with Wales.



# Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales

A new Level 3 qualification available to learners from September 2023, awarded for the first time in Summer 2025

Replaced the Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate qualification – which had its last award in Summer 2024

Primarily designed for students aged 16-19, and can be taken alongside other Level 3 qualifications, including A levels

Consists of 3 Projects graded A-U - Global Community Project (25%), Future Destinations Project (25%), Individual Project (50%)

Equivalent in size and demand to an A Level and will be graded (overall) A\*-E

walesonline.co.uk/news/education/top-uk-universities-refuse-accept-27987191

W News Education Wales schools

## Top UK universities refuse to accept the Welsh Baccalaureate

There is only patchy recognition of the Welsh Government's qualification at the UK's top universities

NEWS By **Abbie Wightwick** Education Editor

13:19, 26 OCT 2023 UPDATED 16:12, 26 OCT 2023

Bookmark    

Enter your postcode for local news and info  Enter your postcode  In YourArea

ADVERTISEMENT







# HE Provision in Wales / Darpariaeth AU yng Nghymru

8 Universities and 1 Conservatoire in Wales - 1 Russell Group (Cardiff)

Enrolments at Welsh HEPs decreased by 2% from 154,385 in 2022/23 to 150,3680 in 2023/24. UG = 111k, PG 39k.

Almost half of students at Welsh HEP's came from Wales before they began their studies (46%)

The most popular subject group at Welsh HEPs in 2023/24 was Business and management.

Wales is a net importer of full-time students from the UK. There were 45,045 full-time students from other UK countries at Welsh HEPs, compared to 27,785 full-time students from Wales studying at HEPs in the rest of the UK.





# HE Provision in Wales / Darpariaeth AU yng Nghymru

Opportunities for students to study through Welsh or English, depending on institution. Some offer degrees through the medium of Welsh in full, whereas others may have set modules in Welsh.

Scholarships available to students who study certain number of credits through Welsh at University funded by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

NHS Wales Bursary Scheme is currently available to students choosing to study an NHS course at a HEI in Wales.

In summary; The scheme provides financial support for tuition fees and a contribution towards living costs for all eligible home UK students coming to study an eligible healthcare course in Wales. This is subject to new students committing in advance to work in the NHS in Wales for **two years** post qualification. Largely this includes the AHP / Nursing suite of courses.





# Student Finance Wales

Universities in Wales can charge up to **£9,790** tuition fees per year\*

*\*From September 26, formerly £9,535.*

**Mixture of loan and grant** available each year for all eligible students from Wales on their first undergraduate degree course to help with living costs and a **tuition fee loan** available

The amount for living costs available in 2023/24 to students:

who study away from home - **£12,345**

living with parents - **£10,480**

who study in London not living with parents - **£15,415**

**Means tested student finance** – amount available as a loan and amount as a grant is determined by students' taxable household income

# Welsh Students Funding Table 2025/26 (living away from home outside of London)



Household income	Living away from parental home and studying outside London	
	Loan	Grant
£18,370 or less	£4,245	£8,100
£25,000	£5,398	£6,947
£35,000	£7,137	£5,208
£45,000	£8,876	£3,469
£59,200 or more	£11,345	£1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£12,345</b>	



# Welsh Language Provision

Each county has at least one Welsh medium school, with some counties offering more in larger Welsh speaking locations, such as Yns Mon and Carmarthenshire.

In total, there are 405 Welsh-medium schools in Wales, predominantly Primary.

A total of 93K students are educated in Welsh-Medium schools (21%)

All students in Wales must learn Welsh until they are 16 years old, this can be either 1st or 2nd language, and takes form in a GCSE. This will be in conjunction with English at GCSE level.

Journey to a million (no, not UCAS!) by 2050 - CYMRAEG 2050

*Figures from 2025*



## Education in Scotland

- The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is the national curriculum for all schools, from nursery to secondary school. It emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, skills development, and personal achievement.
- Primary School P1 – P7 / Secondary School S1 – S6 (No 6<sup>th</sup> form Colleges)
- National 5 are equivalent to GCSE's and are usually sat in S4
- Highers/ Advanced Highers are studied in place of A Levels and are sat in S5 and S6
- Pupils may also take a Scottish Baccalaureate in Sciences, Languages, Expressive Arts, or Social Sciences and these consist of related Highers and Advanced Highers and an interdisciplinary project
- College courses – HNC/HND



---

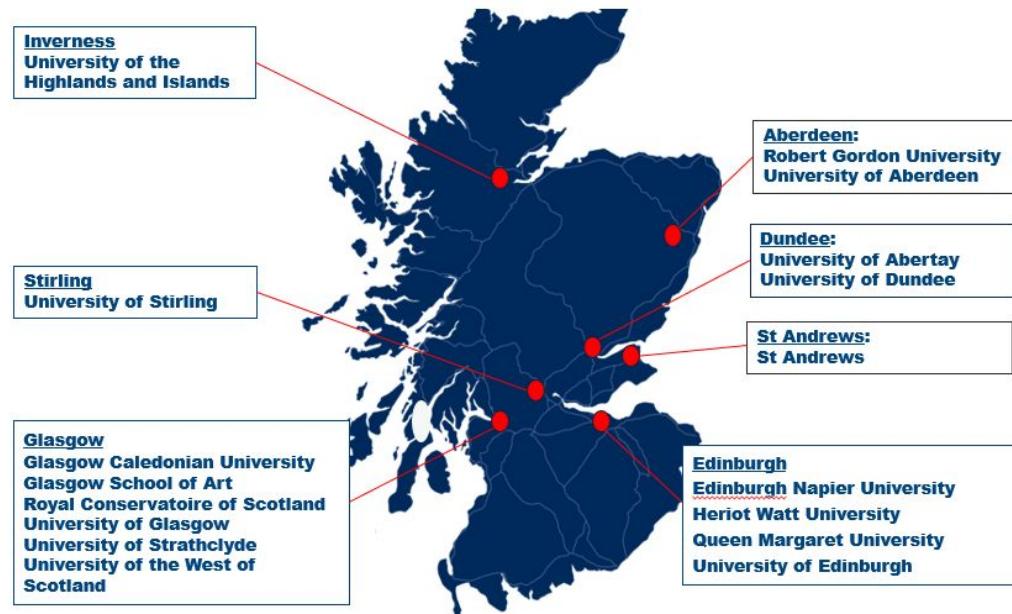
## Gaelic Language in Scotland/ Gàidhlig ann an Alba

- The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was passed by the Scottish Parliament with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.
- Scotland's most recent census (2021) showed that from a population of 5.5 million just over 1%, only 60,000 people, can speak Scottish Gaelic fluently. Most are located in the Western Isles, Highlands and Glasgow.
- Gaelic Medium Education is available in 14 out of 32 local authorities with 62 primary and 29 secondary schools
- You can also study Gaelic as a Modern Language from Primary School up to Advanced Higher level
- There are university courses taught wholly in Gaelic available at UHI & you can study Gaelic medium Education (primary and secondary teacher training)



# HE provision in Scotland

- 19 Higher Education Institutions including 15 Universities, a College of Higher Education, an Art School, a Conservatoire and the Open University in Scotland
- Glasgow School of Art / Scotland's Rural College degrees awarded by others
- 4 Ancient Universities – oldest founded in 1413 / newest in 2011





---

# Higher Education in Scotland

- Over 4000 degrees on offer
- Degrees are typically 4 years
- Flexibility in early years of many degrees
- HEIs usually require 4-6 Highers for entry, but this may vary with subject
- Widening Access: Commissioner for Fair Access  
2030 target 20% of students entering university to be from Scotland's 20% most deprived backgrounds
- “Free” for Scottish domiciled students



---

## Student Finance in Scotland

- Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) is Scotland's student funding agency:
  - Provide government money to Universities and colleges to pay tuition fees
  - Provide bursary and/or loans for living cost support
- Tuition Fee funding for Scottish students studying in Scotland:
  - £1,285 for HNC and HND and any other sub-degree
  - £1,820 for undergraduate (first) degree or PGDE courses
  - £1,205 for courses at private colleges or institutions
- Students can receive funding for HND followed by degree study and are allowed a +1 year for change of course/ repeat of year
- Scottish students studying elsewhere in the UK are entitled to a Tuition Fee Loan for the full cost



---

# Student Finance in Scotland

## Student Maintenance Support – 2025/26

Household income	Bursary	Loan	Total
£0 to £20,999	£2,000	£9,400	£11,400
£21,000 to £23,999	£1,125	£9,400	£10,525
£24,000 to £33,999	£500	£9,400	£9,900
£34,000 and above	£0	£8,400	£8,400

### Loan Repayments:

- Threshold is £32,745
- Current interest rate is 4.3%
- Debt written off after 30 years



---

## Education in Northern Ireland

- The education system in Northern Ireland consists of different types of schools under the control of management committees who are also the employers of teachers.
- Controlled schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority through school Boards of Governors (BoGs). Primary and secondary school BoGs consist of representatives of transferors - mainly the Protestant churches - along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority.
- Catholic Maintained schools are managed by BoGs nominated by trustees - mainly Roman Catholic - along with parents, teachers and EA representatives.
- Voluntary (grammar) and Integrated schools invite Protestant and Catholic to come together with other traditions to improve their understanding of one another, their own cultures, religions, and values.
- School years are counted differently to England-
  - Primary: P1-P7
  - High School: Year 8-Year 12



# Irish Language in Northern Ireland/ An Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann

- Irish has been recognised as an official language since 2022. The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 legislation was actually based off of the 1993 Welsh Language Act.
- Irish-Medium education is education provided in an Irish speaking school or unit. There are currently 30 Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland and a further 10 Irish-medium units attached to English-medium host schools.
  - Of the 30 schools, 28 are primary and 2 are post primary.
  - Of the 10 Irish-medium units attached to English-medium host schools, 7 are primary and 3 are post-primary.
- You can study Irish from Year 7 as part of modern foreign language(MFL) classes, GCSE Irish and A Level Irish without being in an irish-medium school.
  - Some Gaelscoil Rang 7/Irish-medium p7 pupils will have sat their GCSE Irish before starting high school.
  - Gaelscoil Rang 7/Irish-medium p7 pupils will also sit the SEAG Transfer test as Gaeilge/ in Irish if wishing to go to a Grammar school.
- There are university courses taught partly or wholly in Irish, available at most of the HEIs and at St Mary's University College.



# Education qualifications in Northern Ireland

## Level 2 (Years 11 & 12)

- (Academic) GCSEs
  - A\*- G grading
- (Vocational) BTECs/OCN NI Level 2/NFQ Level 2
  - Pass, Merit & Distinction grading

## Level 3 (Years 13 & 14)

Most High Schools have a Sixth form attached or students can choose to attend a college, e.g. Northern Regional College, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) or Belfast Met College.

In some towns with many local sixth forms, there may be a learning partnership in place, where students can stay on at their current school for sixth form but choose to study 1 A Level at another school - this gives the students a wider variety of subject choices.

- A Levels - split into AS (Year 13) AND A2(Year 14)
- BTEC qualifications or OCR Nationals (eg Cambridge Technical Award)

General A levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biology</li><li>• Geography</li><li>• English Literature</li><li>• Life &amp; Health Sciences</li><li>• History</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mathematics</li><li>• Physics</li><li>• Polish</li><li>• Religious Studies</li><li>• Sociology</li></ul>
Applied A levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Art &amp; Design GCE</li><li>• BTEC in Art &amp; Design</li><li>• Extended Certificate in Applied Business</li><li>• BTEC in Construction</li><li>• BTEC in Hospitality</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cambridge Technical Introductory Diploma in IT (SA)</li><li>• Cambridge Technical Introductory Diploma in Sport (SA)</li><li>• Health &amp; Social Care (Single Award)</li><li>• Health &amp; Social Care (Double award)</li></ul>
Magnagfelt & Rural Learning Partnership Subject Offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BTEC in Engineering</li><li>• Chemistry</li><li>• Digital Technology</li><li>• Environmental Technology</li><li>• French</li><li>• Government &amp; Politics</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Irish</li><li>• Moving Image Arts</li><li>• Music</li><li>• Nutrition &amp; Food Science</li><li>• Performing Arts</li></ul>
Sixth Form Enhancement Courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (Level 3)</li><li>• NEA Level 3 Award in Communication (Level 3)</li><li>• NEA Level 3 Award in Performance (Level 3)</li></ul>



---

# HE provision in Northern Ireland

## 3 Universities

- Queen's University, Belfast
- Ulster University
- Open University

## 2 University Colleges

- St Mary's
- Stranmillis University College

**6 FE colleges** - all of which offer opportunities to study for and attain various higher education qualifications.

- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Northern Regional College
- Southern Regional College
- South Eastern Regional College
- North West Regional College
- South West College
- College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

The vast majority of HE students remain on 3 year full time degrees with the three universities offering a number of Higher Level Apprenticeships working across both universities and employers.

The university colleges offer teaching programmes/ liberal arts degrees, with the six further education colleges offering several foundation degrees as an alternative route to university.



## HE provision in Northern Ireland - Student Cap

- Northern Ireland universities are limited by a cap on numbers in contrast to English universities.
- The MaSN (Maximum Student Number) cap is a budgetary measure set by the Stormont Executive and limits the number of students that can be enrolled in Northern Ireland's universities from across the island of Ireland.
- There are expected to be about 14,500 18-year-old students from Northern Ireland entering higher education in 2030, according to the “most likely” scenario forecast by UCAS. That is a rise of just over 20% from 11,900 in 2023
- However, as places at Ulster University and Queen's University, Belfast are capped by DfE, a rise in demand for places could see more Northern Ireland students going to universities in the rest of the UK.



---

# Student Finance in Northern Ireland

- Funding for studying in all publicly funded institutions and most private providers is set at £9,535\* per year for UK undergraduates unless they have Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland fee status.
  - In this case students would pay £4,855 per year because the tuition fees are partially funded by the Department for the Economy.

For Maintenance support students can apply for:

- a maintenance loan
- maintenance grant (only available if household income is below £41,065)
- special support grant (may be available if household income is below £41,065 and they're eligible for certain qualifying benefits.)

Students start repaying their loan after leaving university or college when they are earning over £26,065 and any loan they still owe will be cancelled 25 years after the April when they first became responsible for paying back the loan.

\*2025/26 figures

---



**Time to test your knowledge...**

Blooket...