Quality standards for UK courses and institutions

The UK education system is respected and valued all over the world. To ensure standards remain high, there are many independent organisations who regularly inspect and accredit UK institutions and courses. You can be sure that studying in the UK is the right choice to make the most of your education and enhance your future career prospects.

English language centres in the UK

All the English language teaching centres you'll find in the institution finder (internal link) are accredited by Accreditation UK. This is the UK accreditation scheme for English language courses, run by the British Council in partnership with English UK, the national association of accredited English language centres. There are over 430 accredited English language centres in the UK.

English language courses are inspected every four years, and there is also a requirement for annual reporting. A team of independent inspectors check four standards:

- management of teaching and course provision
- learning resources and environment for students and teachers
- teaching and learning standards
- welfare, support and services for students.

Only English language courses that meet these standards are listed in the course finder.

You can find out more about English language course accreditation at the Accreditation UK website.

UK higher education universities and colleges

Although each UK institution is responsible for the standards and quality of its programmes, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) regularly carries out independent audits. They ensure that institutions in the UK are providing higher education, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and at an appropriate academic standard.

The QAA have also developed a code of practice for UK institutions who deliver degree programmes in other countries. So if you choose to study a UK qualification in your own country, you will benefit from the same high standards of teaching, resource and support
as you would from studying in the UK.

Many departments within UK institutions are also accredited by professional bodies who guide the curriculum and carry out review visits.

Colleges in Scotland are subject to inspections by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMle). Find out more at the HMle website.

UK independent schools

The majority of independent schools in the UK are members of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), part of ISC, ensures that all member schools are regularly inspected to maintain high standards.

You can find out more about independent school inspections at the ISC website.

UK independent schools that are not members of the ISC are inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted). In Scotland they are inspected by HMle and inspections reports for each institution can be viewed at the HMle website.

All UK independent schools are measured against the following range of standards:

- quality of education provided
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students
- welfare, health and safety of students
- premises and accommodation
- provision of information and the way in which complaints are handled.

UK independent sixth-form and tutorial colleges

Independent colleges in the UK are regularly inspected and accredited. This is carried out either by the British Accreditation Council (BAC) or the Independent Schools Council (ISC). Inspectors are aware of the needs of international students, such as English Language support and advice on living in the UK.

You can find out more at the BAC website and the ISC website.

State sector further education colleges in the UK are inspected or quality assured by different bodies according to the courses they offer.

You can search for UK universities, colleges, independent schools and English language teaching centres in the institution finder. (internal link)

Useful Links

Accreditation UK - www.britishcouncil.org/accreditation.htm
HMle - www.hmie.gov.uk
ISC - www.isc.co.uk
BAC - www.the-bac.org