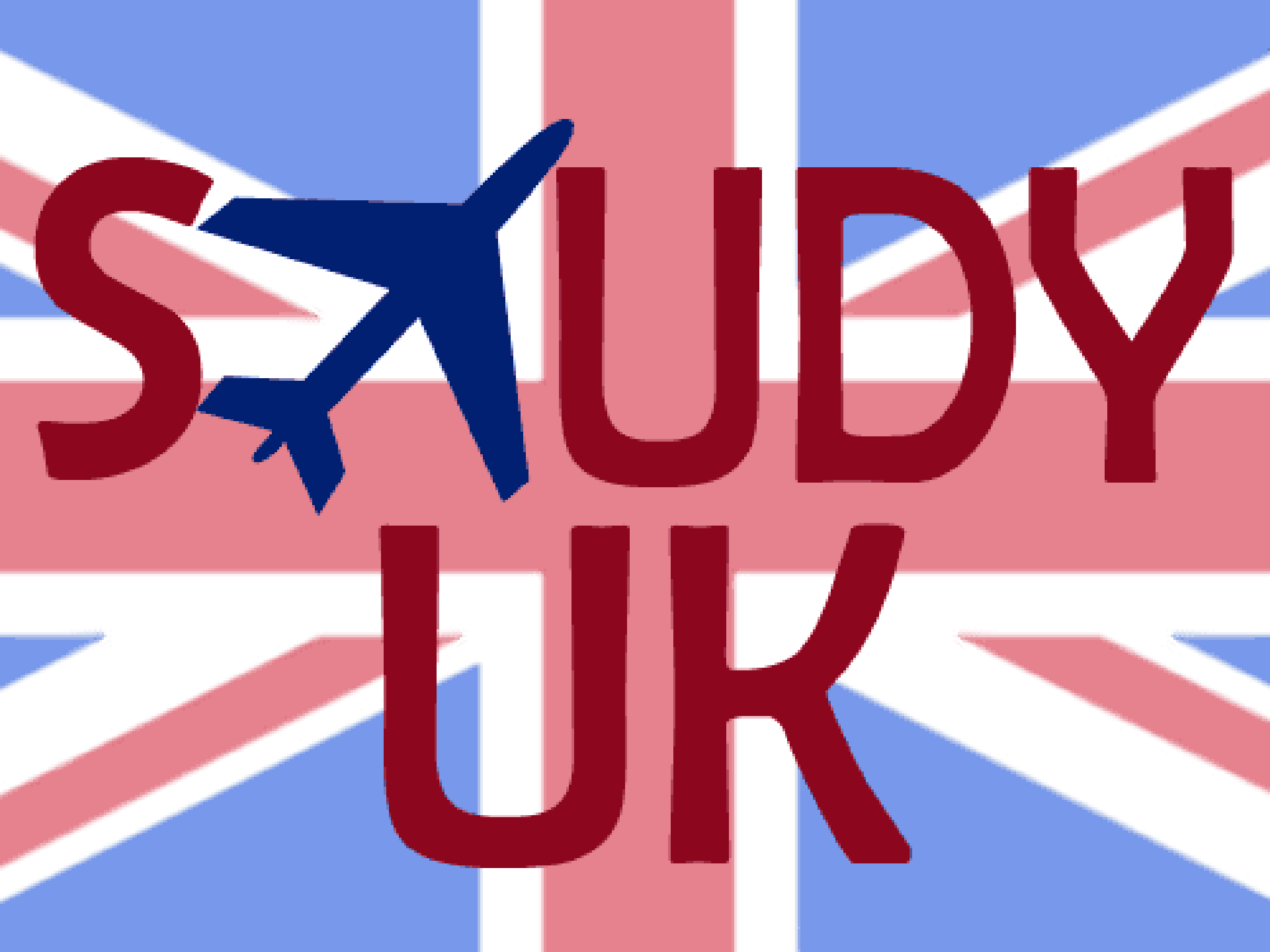




STUDY

UK

Education in the United Kingdom is a devolved matter with each of the countries of the United Kingdom having separate systems under separate governments: the UK Government is responsible for England; the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive are responsible for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.

In each country there are five stages of education: Early years, Primary, Secondary, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). The law states that full time education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) and 16, the Compulsory School Age (CSA). In England, compulsory education or training has been extended to 18 for those born after 1 September 1997. This full-time education does not need to be at a school and a growing number of parents choose to home educate. Prior to the Compulsory School Age, children can be educated at nursery if parents wish, though there is only limited government funding for such places.

Further Education is non-compulsory, and covers non-advanced education which can be taken at further (including tertiary) education colleges and Higher Education institutions (HEIs). The fifth stage, Higher Education, is study beyond A levels or BTECs (and their equivalent) which, for most full-time students, takes place in universities and other Higher Education institutions and colleges.

The National Curriculum (NC), established in 1988, provides a framework for education in England and Wales between the ages of 5 and 18. Though the National Curriculum is not compulsory, it is followed by most state schools, but many private schools, academies, free schools and home educators design their own curricula. In Scotland, the nearest equivalent is the Curriculum for Excellence programme, and in Northern Ireland there is something known as the common curriculum. The Scottish qualifications the National 4/5s, Highers and Advanced Highers are highly similar to the English Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced Level (A2) courses.

Rankings

Traditionally a high-performing country in international rankings of education, the UK has stagnated in recent years in such rankings as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests; in 2013 for reading and maths the country as a whole stood in the middle-rankings, a position broadly similar to three years before. Within the UK, Scotland performed marginally better than England; both were slightly ahead of Northern Ireland and markedly ahead of Wales. However, these results contradict those of the education and publishing firm Pearson published in 2014, which placed the UK in second place across European countries and sixth worldwide; these rankings took account of higher-education graduate rates, which may have accounted for the higher ranking than in PISA.

