



Borderwise:

Education

This information sheet aims to provide a general overview of the education system in Northern Ireland (NI).



Introduction

The Department of Education is responsible for the administration of pre-school, primary and post-primary education in Northern Ireland. There are five Education and Library Boards which are local Education Authorities. They have responsibility for ensuring adequate education provision in their areas. The Department of Employment and Learning has responsibility for further education. In NI it is compulsory for children to attend school between the ages of four and sixteen.



Overview

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 (nursery, primary, special, secondary and grammar schools) are under the management of the schools Board of Governors and the Employing Authorities are the five Education and Library Boards
- Maintained (nursery, primary, special and secondary) are under the management of the Board of Governors and the Employing Authority is the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
- Other Maintained (primary, special and secondary)
- Voluntary (grammar), Integrated (primary and secondary) and Institutions of Further and Higher Education – each school is under the management of a Board of Governors.

Primary Schools

Children attend primary school in Northern Ireland between the ages of four and eleven. During the final year at primary school pupils sit the 11+ transfer examination and their transition to secondary education is based on academic selection. However the education minister has recently outlined educational reforms which will include abolishing the transfer examination from 2009. The final 11-plus transfer test will take place in 2008, after which a choice of post-primary schools will be available to parents and pupils. The Assembly is still to vote on an alternative to the current academic selection.

Secondary Schools

At present Secondary education is largely selective with pupils going to grammar schools or secondary schools according to academic ability. Pupils begin secondary school aged 11 or 12 and follow the National Curriculum. At sixteen students sit their GCSE examinations which also marks the end of compulsory education; At sixteen most students either transfer to sixth form at secondary school or a Further Education College to study A-Levels or vocational qualifications and training. The results of these examinations determine entry in higher education.

Going
North

Education Maintenance Allowance

An allowance of £60 per fortnight (2007 rates) is available to students aged 16-19 who stay on at school after completing their GCSE's. The grant is intended to help students cover their day-to-day living costs.

Further information is available at www.delni.gov.uk

Further and Higher Education

Further Education Colleges

Further education comprises education and training which takes place after second level schooling. In Northern Ireland there are six regional Further Education colleges where a wide range of courses are provided including essential skills, vocational and academic programmes as well as some Higher Education courses. Further information is available online at www.delni.gov.uk

How to apply to University?

UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Service) is the central applications body for full-time undergraduate courses at Northern Ireland universities and colleges and is the equivalent of the CAO in Ireland. You can apply online through the UCAS website or through your school or as an individual. Further information is available online at: www.ucas.co.uk

Student Loans for Tuition fees

Northern Ireland universities and colleges can charge new students up to £3,000 a year for undergraduate courses. You can apply for a student loan for tuition fees which you only have to repay after you have graduated and are earning over £15,000 a year. The fees will be paid directly to the University or college on behalf of a student.

Student Loans for Maintenance

Student Loans for maintenance are designed to help students cover their living costs at University. Again you will only have to repay once you are earning over £15,000 a year. However, if you are moving from the Republic of Ireland to study you may not be entitled to maintenance support in the same way as home students. If you have been settled in Northern Ireland for over three years you will be classed as a home student and will be able to apply for financial support for living costs. More detailed information is available at: www.delni.gov.uk

Republic of Ireland Students

Maintenance grants are available for ROI students studying approved Undergraduate courses in the UK.

Further information is available from the Department of Education and Sciences website: www.education.ie

Contact Details

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