

# Exams for home-educated children

A plain-English overview of taking qualifications outside school.

England · Wales · NI

Reference

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## THE BASICS

Home-educated children sit GCSEs / IGCSEs as **private (external) candidates** at an exam centre that accepts them — often an FE college or a dedicated private-candidate centre. You pay both the exam board's entry fee and the centre's admin fee, roughly **£150–£200 per subject**.

## WHY MOST CHOOSE IGCSES

Standard GCSEs often require coursework (non-exam assessment), which is hard or impossible for a private candidate. **IGCSEs are assessed by terminal exams only**, so they suit home educators. Edexcel (Pearson) and Cambridge International are the most home-ed-friendly boards. IGCSEs are accepted by UK universities and employers.

## TIMING

Flexible — private candidates can sit at any age and spread subjects across years (most take exams between about 14 and 18).

## FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

English and Maths (Entry Level to Level 2) — a lower-pressure, employer-recognised alternative or stepping stone.

### FIND A CENTRE EARLY

Centres that take private candidates can be limited, especially for less common subjects — book ahead. Maths, English Language & Literature and the sciences are the easiest to find.

### SCOTLAND IS DIFFERENT

Scotland uses National 5 and Highers rather than GCSEs — check with the SQA and local centres.