



**Recognised and respected around the world, Scottish ‘Highers’ and ‘Advanced Highers’ are robust qualifications that equip students for university and life beyond school. John Edward, Director of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), explains more and highlights some other benefits of choosing a Scottish boarding school.**

Scottish boarding schools have a purposeful learning environment and a strong tradition of academic attainment which is reflected in pupils’ exam performance year after year. Most of Scotland’s schools follow the Scottish curriculum with exams awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the national accreditation and awarding body of Scotland. **Scottish qualifications are based on high standards, they provide a guarantee of quality, and they are recognised all over the world for entry to university.** (In fact, other countries use SQA standards as a benchmark for developing their own exam systems and qualifications. SQA has a strong track record of sharing its expertise with governments and partner agencies to support the development of education and training internationally.) Achievement levels are monitored carefully to make sure that, from year to year, awards hold the same value, which means that the qualifications are widely respected. SQA also continually reviews its qualifications to make sure that they remain relevant to today’s market.

**“Good qualifications are more important today than they have ever been. Our qualifications genuinely capture and reflect our candidates’ skills and provide for them a pathway to the workplace or further study.”**

***Dr Janet Brown***

***Chief Executive of SQA and Scotland’s Chief Examining Officer***

In Scotland, pupils sit Standard Grade exams at age 15/16, Highers at age 16/17 and Advanced Highers at age 17/18. Typically, the more able students take 5 Highers (compared with 3 A levels in the English system) which means that they have a broader education for longer. **In their final year at school, students study Advanced Highers, which are very widely respected as a rigorous qualification that prepares them for the demands of university.**

Highers and Advanced Highers have 5 grades, with A, B, and C being a pass. There is a standardised scale for marking exams and each band carries a set number of tariff points for university entrance. Candidates can use their final year at school to 'top up' the number of tariff points they have achieved in the previous year, giving them the best possible chance of gaining a place at the university of their choice. **An advantage of the Scottish system is that candidates apply to University in S6 (sixth year) on the basis of determined Higher results rather than predicted grades which eliminates much uncertainty involved with conditional offers.**

Scotland has much to offer students from around the world who want to be educated in an English-speaking European country. **A small country with a pleasant climate and good transport links, Scotland is safe, friendly and welcoming.** The quality of life is good - Scotland offers a stunning landscape and vibrant, modern cities that boast a rich cultural heritage. Scotland and its people have made many significant contributions to humanity, including inventions that have changed the modern world. The telephone, radar, television, penicillin, mammal cloning, bicycles, and 'keyhole' surgery, are all examples of Scottish innovation.

**International students are attracted to Scotland from countries all around the world although the highest numbers currently come from Germany, Hong Kong, China, Russia, Spain and the United States of America.** At Scottish boarding schools, great importance is attached to the creation of a community in which boys and girls can settle easily, make firm friendships and feel at home. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils enjoy a wide variety of outdoor pursuits that form part of the wider school curriculum.

**Travel to and from Scotland is convenient with International airports in Edinburgh and Glasgow. There are direct flights to both airports from around 90 destinations worldwide. Another option is to fly to London Heathrow or Amsterdam Schiphol, from where there are convenient transfers to Edinburgh and Glasgow that take just an hour.** Alternatively, there are international airports in Manchester and Newcastle and a number of regional airports around Scotland. Students travelling from overseas are, of course, met at airports by school staff.

***Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) provides impartial advice and guidance to families considering choosing an independent, fee-paying school in Scotland. For further information, visit [www.scis.org.uk/for-parents/boarding-schools](http://www.scis.org.uk/for-parents/boarding-schools) or telephone Sarah Randell on +44 (0)131 556 2316.***