

A-Levels

College-based qualifications, suited to students who:

- Achieve at least 5 GCSEs grades 5-9, including English and Maths
- Want to study a range of subjects
- Want to study a particular subject/career path at university.

You can normally study three or more A-levels over two years.

Assessment

Usually by a series of examinations, although some subjects, such as Art, may include a coursework element. The grades you achieve in your A-Levels, will determine the subject you are able to study and where.

Matters to consider before making your final A-level choices

The A-Levels you choose, can impact what you do later, i.e. the university courses you are eligible to apply for. If you are undecided as to what you wish to do in the future, you can still make smart choices now that will leave you in the best position. Your Careers Adviser will be able to talk you through the considerations you need to make, before making your A-Level choices.

Be prepared for a big jump in the level of difficulty in transition from GCSE to A-Level. You will be expected to manage your time effectively, as you will need to put in a significant amount of time outside of the hours spent in the classroom.

How do I know which A-Level choices to make, if I know what I want to do in the future?

Universities will usually look for specific A-levels. You won't be able to apply to some degree-courses without specific A-levels, with the appropriate grades. E.g.

Pharmacy: Chemistry, plus at least one from Biology, Maths and Physics

English: usually English Literature, maybe English Literature and Language or English Language

Geology / Earth Sciences: at least two from Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology

Look at University course requirements online. They also all have Open Day events. Attending these will provide you with an idea of University life and offer you the opportunity to talk to course leaders.

What if I still do not have a clear idea as to what I want to do in the future?

Many Universities, and courses, will consider you, whatever you choose.

What do these subjects have in common?: Accountancy, anthropology, archaeology, banking, business studies, classical civilisations, hospitality, information science, law, management, marketing, media studies, philosophy, politics, psychology, public relations, religious studies/theology, retail management, social work, sociology, surveying, television, travel and tourism...

They will all consider a very wide range of A-level choices without essential subject requirements.

BTECs

College-based qualifications that involve continual assessment throughout the course, by means of coursework/practical projects. Some may include an element of work placement.

You can study BTEC qualifications at three different levels:

Levels 1-2 = GCSE equivalent (suitable for students who achieved lower grades at GCSE level)

Level 3 = A-Level equivalent (suitable for students who achieved higher grades at GCSE level)

Levels 4-7 = Degree equivalent

You can also study BTEC as a Subsidiary Diploma, a Diploma or an Extended Diploma.

BTEC Subsidiary Diploma: equivalent to 1 A- Level;

BTEC Diploma: equivalent to 2 A- Levels;

BTEC Extended Diploma: equivalent to 3 A- Levels; so you can usually study a mix (either of BTEC or BTEC with A- Levels)

Are BTEC qualifications for me?

BTEC qualifications tend to be more vocational and practical, which may suit both your learning style and what you want to do after college. If you are fortunate enough to know what career you are working towards, you should give serious consideration to studying a practical BTEC. You will gain the real skills you need for the career you want. And if you prefer a hands-on approach to qualifications, rather than the textbook and classroom learning that A- Levels tend to favour, a BTEC might be right for you. Studying for a BTEC, with one or two exceptions, is not going to stand in the way of a university place.

What can I study at BTEC level?

Business Studies, Engineering, Information Technology, Health and Social Care and Travel & Tourism, tend to be popular BTEC subjects

Some universities will be happy with just 1 BTEC, (equivalent of 3 A-Levels), while others will require you to have at least 1 A-Level alongside your BTEC. You must check the course you are thinking of applying for, (see UCAS website,) to find what the entry requirements are. You may also need to ask the university you are applying to, which grade (pass / merit / distinction) is required from your BTEC, if they only list A- Level grades.

If you choose to study just 1 BTEC in a particular subject, it is very likely that the courses you can apply for at University, will be restricted to the same, or similar, kind of subject. This is great if you know in advance exactly what you want to do, but it doesn't leave much room for flexibility.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships:

Work while you study – an apprenticeship is a way to gain the skills, knowledge and experience you need to access many careers, combining work, training, and study, letting you “earn while you learn”.

Is an Apprenticeship for me?

Apprenticeships are ideal if you have a clear idea of the career you’d like to pursue, and you’re willing to commit to work and study. Unlike school/college/traditional degree course, the majority of your learning will be through on-the-job training in your place of work. There are many different apprenticeships available across a wide range of industries, and for a wide variety of job roles. Your training costs are funded by the government and your employer.

Apprenticeships would suit someone who:

- * has a clear idea of the type of career they wish to pursue
- * is willing to commit to work and study, but would prefer a more practical and work-related approach to learning
- * is ready to start work with an employer, and be based in the workplace most of the time
- * is well-organised and able to cope with the competing demands of work and academic study at the same time
- * is ready to be assessed through a mix of assignments and written work, including essays, reports, practical exercises, end tests, and exams

No matter what kind of career you want to follow, you need to do your research and find out if you can reach your career goals through an apprenticeship, or if you need/would prefer to study full-time at university or college.

Apprenticeships are not the “easy” option. Holding down a full-time job and studying takes commitment and hard work, and it won’t be right for everyone. You’ll need to prove yourself in the workplace, while getting to grips with studying for a higher level qualification. You’ll be expected to achieve academically and at work, managing your time and adjusting to longer hours, with fewer holidays than at school/college/university.

Key things to investigate

- * Find out about the employer – is it the type of company you want to work for? Are they well-established?
- * Find out about the training provider, college, or university where you could be studying.

- * What GCSE qualifications, subjects, and grades are they looking for?
- * What essential/desirable skills and experience do they ask for, and what qualities are they are looking for in applicants?
- * What is the pay or salary?

Intermediate Apprenticeships (equivalent to 5 GCSE passes at Grade 5). To qualify for an Intermediate Apprenticeship, the applicant should ideally have 5 GCSE qualifications (Grade 2 or above).

Advanced Apprenticeships (equivalent to 2 A-Level passes). To start an Advanced Apprenticeship, the applicant should ideally have 5 good GCSE qualifications at Grade 4 or above, or have completed an Intermediate Apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships take 1 to 5 years to complete, depending on their level.

How do I find an apprenticeship?

- Apprenticeship vacancies appear throughout the year – each will give a deadline for applications, and start dates. Don't wait until the deadline to make an application – some companies close their recruitment as soon as they have a sufficient number of suitable candidates.
- Vacancies with larger firms often start appearing from September, but most start to be advertised from January / February onwards. Smaller businesses might start recruiting a month or two before the job starts, so if you hope to start work in August or September, start looking from March/April onwards.
- <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship> and www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk These are national websites, where most apprenticeships are displayed.
- Many colleges/training providers also have apprenticeship opportunities and it is worth applying through that route.
- Ask your Careers Adviser, Mr Dickerson, Careers Teacher, Mrs Griffiths-Jones, as well as the local press and social media sites, particularly to seek out local opportunities.
- You may also apply through college, some will expect you to supply your own placement others may help find a placement, a few may have placements available if contacted by local employers, though these tend to go college students who have completed a course in the same field.