

# Options after Year 11

*A young person's guide  
to  
post-16 options*



This booklet gives you information about the options available to you after year 11, so that you can make informed decisions about your next steps.

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*A careers adviser from 15billionebp is available in your school to help you with your plans. The member of staff responsible for careers in your school will have details of when the careers adviser is available.*

# Post-16 options

The government has decided that young people have to continue in education or training until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (this is called the Raising of Participation Age, or RPA).

There are a number of post-16 options available:

- **full-time education** in a school or college;
- **work-based learning** through an Apprenticeship or pre-Apprenticeship training;
- **full-time work or volunteering** combined with part-time education or training.

*Here's some more detail on the main options:*

## Full-time Education

*You have a choice about where to study. It depends not just on what type of course you want to do, but also on the type of environment you are looking for:*

**School Sixth Forms** are part of schools that also provide education for students up to Year 11. Some schools co-operate to run a joint sixth form centre. They mostly offer A level studies, but some also offer a few vocational qualifications, like BTEC. Priority is given to students who are progressing internally, so places for students applying from other schools could be limited. School Sixth Forms are more likely to have a uniform or dress code than other places of study.

**Sixth Form Colleges** and **16-19 Schools** specialise in education for 16 -19 year olds and take students from a lot of different schools (though some will give priority to students from the local area). Sixth Form Colleges usually offer a combination of A levels and a wide range of vocational qualifications, like BTEC. Some 16-19 Schools are similar to school sixth forms in curriculum and learning environment, others are more like sixth form colleges; a few specialise in a vocational area.

**Further Education (FE) Colleges** provide courses for students of all ages, including many part-time courses. Some have separate classes or even a separate site for 16 -19 year olds. Most of the courses they offer are job-related, like BTECs and more specific skills-based courses to start qualifying for a particular job (examples include motor vehicle repair, hairdressing and accounting). Some specialise in courses for a particular work sector and a few offer A level studies.

**University Technical Colleges (UTCs)** and **Studio Schools** are for students between the ages of 14 and 19. Like school sixth forms, priority for places on post-16 courses may be given to students progressing internally. UTCs specialise in subjects that need modern, technical, industry-standard equipment. Studio Schools often have a vocational specialism, and focus on employability skills and a core of academic qualifications, delivered in a practical and project-based way. Hours spent studying on site are usually longer than in other colleges or sixth forms.

*A list of popular places to study is available from the 15billionebp careers adviser who visits your school.*

# Work-based Learning

## Apprenticeships

Suitable to those who know exactly what they want to do and are ready to start their career in a job, apprenticeships are real jobs, so to gain a place you need to be chosen by an employer as the best applicant for the job. The selection process could involve a test of abilities and an interview and some employers require specific GCSEs from school leavers (often English and Maths at grade C or above).

Apprentices take qualifications that prove they can do the job they are training for. The main qualification is a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). Most Apprentices will start at NVQ Level 2, the level of basic competence in a job, though if you have the right level of qualifications and skills, you may be able to start an Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3).

Other points to consider are:

- Apprenticeship places are limited and there is competition for places, so some young people find that their chances of getting a place are improved by spending some extra time in full-time education or in a Traineeship;
- some employers take direct applications, but other opportunities are available through approved training providers who organise recruitment and training on behalf of employers. The National Apprenticeship Service website ([apprenticeships.org.uk](http://apprenticeships.org.uk)) has details of vacancies;
- there is a minimum pay rate of £3.30 per hour (around £100 for a full working week). Some employers pay more than this: the average pay nationally is around £170 a week

### Key points

- ▣ Mainly available for 16 to 18 year olds, but sometimes open up to age 24
- ▣ Training with an employer leading to qualification in a job sector
- ▣ Minimum wage of £3.30 per hour
- ▣ Apply directly to employers, through training providers or Further Education Colleges
- ▣ Can be employed from day one on a full wage, but employers will be selective!

## Traineeship (Pre-apprenticeship)

Lasting up to 6 months, Traineeships give you the chance to gain more qualifications and/or experience to help you progress on to an Apprenticeship with an employer. The training includes work experience placement(s) of at least 6 weeks and involves:

- work preparation, including help with job applications / CVs, preparing for interviews, communication skills and team work;
- qualifications in English and/or Maths for those not achieving grade C at school;
- the possibility of a job-specific qualification (for example, NVQ Level 1).

### Key points

- ▣ Traineeships are aimed at 16 to 18 year olds
- ▣ Designed to build confidence, motivation and improving key skills needed in jobs: numeracy, literacy & IT
- ▣ Offers opportunities to learn about an area of work
- ▣ Can start at Level 1 and gain work experience in a job area
- ▣ Travel expenses may be paid

## **Full-time work or Volunteering**

For any type of job, the right skills and qualities will be important. Some jobs will require a certain level of qualification and/or relevant work experience. It is important to consider the training and career progression an employer is offering. For many jobs, employers ask for a covering letter, CV (Curriculum Vitae) and an application form. You may be expected to attend an interview and be tested on your literacy and numeracy.

If you have not achieved grades A\*-C for GCSE English and Maths while at school, your employer is expected to provide you with the opportunity to re-sit these or equivalent qualifications.

If you plan to volunteer, you will need to combine this with part-time education or training.

## **Back-up plan**

Whatever your first choice, it is essential to have a back-up plan in place. For example, applying to a few different schools or colleges or, if applying for an apprenticeship, also lining up a relevant full-time college course or traineeship.

# Qualifications

*There are different type and levels of qualifications available, depending on your interests, abilities and GCSE results:*

## A Levels and AS Levels

Highly valued by schools, colleges, universities and employers, A levels and AS Levels give access to a range of careers, further study or an apprenticeship.

They mainly involve studying the theory of a subject combined with some investigative work, and are usually studied full-time at a school or college.

All A levels and AS Levels contain exams, and you may also be assessed through coursework, which can include research, essays, projects, investigations, artwork, fieldwork, orals, experiments or other practicals.

### A Levels

- Study 3 or 4 subjects over 2 years;
- A levels are in-depth study, intensive reading and assessed by exams at the end of the course and limited coursework;
- Exams at the end of two years will determine your final grade;
- You can take subjects already studied at GCSE and/or new subjects e.g. Law, Psychology, Economics;
- Many A level students go on to university;
- You will need at least 5 GCSEs at C or above. Some schools and colleges may ask for more and at least A\* - B grades in subjects related to those you want to study.

### AS Levels

- Study 3 or 4 subjects for 1 year;
- AS Levels are a separate qualification to A levels;
- AS levels are in-depth study, intensive reading and assessed by exams at the end of the course and limited coursework.

#### Note:

- September 2016 will be the mid-phase introduction of changes to A levels and AS Levels.
- Prior to the changes, both qualifications were modular, AS levels were the first year of A Levels and the AS exams counted towards the final mark at the end of the two years.
- From Sep 2016, only Mathematics and Further Mathematics will remain unchanged with the new AS and A level for these subjects being introduced in Sept 2017.

#### Important:

Check with the schools and colleges that you intend to apply to for information on how they are approaching the changes to A Levels and AS Levels.

## BTEC

Designed to meet the needs of employers, BTECs are work-related qualifications for learners taking their first steps into employment or planning to enter university. Developed in consultation with employers and higher education experts, BTECs demonstrate high standards of knowledge and develops practical, interpersonal and thinking skills essential for professional life.

They are mainly assessed through assignments. However, some BTECs contain externally marked tests, which may be paper-based or taken on a computer. Assignments can include tests, research, essays, projects, investigations, artwork, fieldwork, experiments and often link theory with practical exercises.

BTECs are offered at three different levels:

### BTEC Level 3

- Takes 2 years to complete;
- **Extended Diploma** is equivalent to 3 A Levels;
- **Diploma** is equivalent to 2 A Levels;
- **Subsidiary Diploma** is equivalent to 1 A level;
- You will need 4 or 5 GCSEs at C or above to start at Level 3.

### BTEC Level 2 Diploma

- Takes 1 year to complete;
- May be able to retake GCSE English or Maths alongside;
- You can get onto level 2 with a minimum of GCSEs at grades D/E;
- If you do well at this level, it is recognised as equal to 5 GCSEs at C or above;
- Successful completion leads on to Level 3 or into employment.

### BTEC Level 1 Certificate

- Takes 1 year to complete;
- Improve communication, numeracy and literacy at the same time as learning about a career area;
- You can get onto level 1 with lower grades at GCSE and get extra support;
- If you do well on this level, it is recognised as equal to 4 GCSEs at grades D-F;
- Successful completion leads on to Level 2.

## National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)

NVQs are designed to demonstrate a learner's skills, knowledge and understanding needed to do a particular job, e.g. hairdressing, childcare, administration, beauty therapy, construction crafts, catering.

They are usually delivered in the workplace, often as part of an apprenticeship, although some may be delivered in settings that replicate the working environment such as a Further Education College.

Assessment is based on the practical activity you undertake in the workplace and a portfolio of evidence to show that you meet occupational standards. A qualified assessor will observe you while you are at work and question you to test your knowledge and understanding.

They are suitable if you know the job you want and you are keen to get into a job as quickly as you can.

NVQ's are offered at levels 1 to 7.

## International Baccalaureate

An alternative to A levels, but with more subjects studied.

Science, humanities and languages are all compulsory.

## Other Qualifications

There are also **other work related qualifications** available which are similar in approach to NVQ and prepare you for a particular job. Examples include:

**CACHE** Diploma (Childcare)

**ILEX** (Legal Secretarial)

**AAT** (Accounts Technician)

**IMI** (Motor Vehicle Mechanic)



# Qualification table and comparison

What qualification level you start at depends on your GCSE grades (see table below).

Qualification Level	Normal length	Typical entry requirements	Progression
3	2 years	Minimum <b>4 GCSEs at C</b> or above; English and/or Maths may be specified. For <b>A level study, more will be required</b> : at least 5 GCSEs at grade C usually with a grade average higher than C and/or B grade or above in specific subjects.	Higher Education (university level) Training Employment (including Apprenticeships)
2	1 year	Variable, but <b>some grade Ds</b> will usually be required, and again English and/or Maths may be specified.	Level 3 courses Training Employment (including Apprenticeships)
1	1 year	Often no specific entry requirements, but level of <b>English and maths will be assessed</b> .	Level 2 courses Training Employment (including Apprenticeships)
Entry	variable	<b>No specific requirements.</b>	Level 1 courses or Training.

## How the qualifications mentioned in this booklet compare

4 GCSEs (D –F)	BTEC Level 1 Certificate	NVQ Level 1	Traineeship (Pre-apprenticeship)
4/5 GCSEs (A-C)	BTEC Level 2 Diploma	NVQ Level 2	Apprenticeship
2/3 A Levels	BTEC Level 3 Diploma	NVQ Level 3	Advanced Apprenticeship

# Year 11 Progression Timeline

*To make a smooth transition after Year 11, here's what you should be thinking about and taking action on throughout the year:*

## **September to December**

- Think through any career ideas and consider which progression options would be best for you;
- Talk through any ideas with relatives, teachers, learning mentors and your careers adviser;
- Research information about what is on offer at schools and colleges from websites;
- Before making applications, visit as many open events as possible to investigate travel options, view facilities and to talk with teachers;
- Some have early closing dates so be sure to check application deadlines and make sure they are met;
- If interested in Apprenticeships, find out more by registering with [apprenticeships.org.uk](http://apprenticeships.org.uk)

## **January to April**

- To get the best chance of a place on popular courses like construction, performing arts, childcare, sport & exercise, or A levels, get applications in by the end of January;
- For other courses, it's best to get applications in by the end of February;
- For Apprenticeships talk to a careers adviser and check apprenticeship websites for vacancies;
- Check your plans are still on track after mock exam results- talk to a careers adviser if you are unclear;
- Make sure you have a back-up plan in place.

## **May to August**

- Results of applications to schools and colleges should be known by now – if you do not have an offer, take advice on your options;
- If your first choice is an Apprenticeship and you have not yet secured an offer, contact your careers adviser for further advice and guidance on your options;
- If your GCSE results in August are different from expectations, contact your careers adviser for advice and support.

*Careers Advisers from 15billionebp are available in schools to help students with their plans. The member of staff responsible for careers in school will have details of when a careers adviser is available.*

# Financial Support

## 16-19 Bursary

- Some 16 – 19 year-old students in full-time education or training can receive a bursary to help with the costs of studying. The money is a grant, not a loan, so does not have to be repaid.
- Schools, colleges and training providers are responsible for awarding bursaries to students.
- Students in particular circumstances will be eligible to receive a bursary of £1,200 a year. This includes young people in care, care leavers, young people claiming income support, and disabled young people receiving Employment Support Allowance and/or Disability Living Allowance
- Other students facing financial difficulties may be awarded a bursary at the discretion of the education or training provider. The provider also decides the level of discretionary bursaries, when they are paid, and any conditions that students need to meet (for example standards of behaviour or level of attendance). Most providers offer discretionary bursaries to students who were eligible for free school meals at school.
- Some providers give eligible students £100 a term, others give £10 a week. Some do not give money to students but help with food vouchers, transport costs, books and material costs.
- For more information about what is on offer and how to apply, contact individual schools, colleges or training providers.

# USEFUL WEBSITES

## Researching schools, colleges and qualifications

Check details of open events, advice sessions, closing dates and specific course details:

[www.ucasprogress.com](http://www.ucasprogress.com)

[www.londoncolleges.com](http://www.londoncolleges.com)

Note: a list of local schools and colleges is available separately from this booklet. Please ask your careers adviser for a copy of this list and the current open events list.

## Choosing A Levels

Advice and guidance on essential and preferred A level subjects required by universities:

[www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices](http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices)

## Higher Education

If you want to attend a specific university and take a particular course, it is important that you check what they consider acceptable e.g. the likely grades sought at GCSE, A level subjects required and alternative qualifications:

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

## Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Search for vacancies and apply by registering with:

[www.apprenticeship.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeship.org.uk)

For more local information and opportunities, look at:

[www.newhamworkplace.co.uk/apprenticeship.htm](http://www.newhamworkplace.co.uk/apprenticeship.htm)

## 16-19 Bursary

[www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary](http://www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary)

Note: check with schools and colleges as to what is available, the likely amounts and eligibility.

## Careers information, advice and guidance

[www.plotr.co.uk](http://www.plotr.co.uk)

[www.icould.com](http://www.icould.com)

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

[www.careerpilot.org.uk](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk)

[www.careersteer.org](http://www.careersteer.org)

[www.notgoingtouni.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)

## Local information about post-16 options and careers

[www.newhamsussed.co.uk](http://www.newhamsussed.co.uk)

## Volunteering

<https://do-it.org>

## Other

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

Forum where students share knowledge and experiences. Includes study help, choosing a university and careers

# OTHER RESOURCES

## Publications

Check your school or public library for:

“[Choosing your A levels](#)” by Cerys Evans

“[Which A levels? The guide to choosing A Levels and other post-16 qualifications](#)” by Alison Dixon

“Job file” (a careers book with job profiles that includes details of entry requirements, skills and experience required)

## Other

Ask your 15billionebp careers adviser for a copy of the latest **Work & Training** bulletin which gives information and advice for young people who may want to start finding and securing an apprenticeship. The bulletin also lists organisations seeking apprentices as well as details of websites to check for possible opportunities.