

**A Parents/Carers
Guide to
Post 16
Qualifications**

**Careers
and
Guidance**

Introduction

The choice of courses available to young people when they leave school can seem rather complicated to pupils and their parents.

As each college/training provider can set their own entry requirements for different courses, the information in this guide should be used as a general guide. It is very important that pupils and parents visit open events arranged by colleges and training providers to make sure the correct information, relevant to them, is received.

Understanding Qualifications



Post 16 qualifications are offered at different levels. The level you study will depend on your examination results gained at school.

Level 3:

Requirements: At least five GCSE at grades 4 or 5 or above, including English, Maths, usually at grade 5 or above.
Examples: BTEC National, AS/A levels, Advanced NVQ

Level 2:

Requirements: Mainly GCSE grades 3, including English, usually at grade 3, or a BTEC First Certificate/Award - merit/distinction
Examples: BTEC First Diploma, GCSE re-sits, Intermediate NVQ

Level 1:

Requirements: No formal entry requirements required, however, an interest in your chosen subject/industry is necessary
Examples: BTEC Level 1 Certificate, Adult Literacy/Numeracy, Level 1 National Certificate in Further Education (NCFE)

A Levels

The A Level route gives you the opportunity to study more than one subject. You can choose subjects you are interested in studying in more depth. Some A Levels require prior knowledge. For instance, Maths, Sciences and MFLs need good achievement in those subjects at GCSE level. However some A Levels can be studied without having taken them at GCSE level. For example, History, Geography, Psychology and Business need a good general standard of GCSE success.

Make sure you check these out with the colleges. You will need to be confident you can meet the entry requirements for the course. Most A Level courses ask for five GCSEs at grade 5 or above and some subjects require particular grades in certain GCSEs.

If you have a particular university course or career in mind you need to check the entry requirements. For instance, engineering degrees normally require Mathematics at A Level. Universities and colleges set out their preferences for entry to courses in terms of particular subjects as well as their grade requirements.

Where can A Levels lead?

- an advanced Apprenticeship
- a job that includes further training with your employer
- a vocational course that will qualify you to do a specific job
- A Levels prepare you for Higher Education and employment

T Levels

- T Levels are new courses which follow GCSEs and are equivalent to 3 A levels. These 2-year courses, which launched in September 2020, have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work, further training or study.
- T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days).

BTECs and other Vocational Qualifications

BTECs, City & Guilds and OCRs are particular types of work-related qualifications, available in a wide range of subjects. You can take one if you are interested in learning more about a particular sector or industry. They have been designed in collaboration with industry, so they can equip you with the skills and knowledge that employers are looking for and have a mix of theory and practice plus there may be an element of work experience. BTECs are graded as Distinction, Merit, Pass.

BTECs are available in a wide range of subjects, including:

Art & Design, Beauty, Business, Catering, Construction, Engineering, Hairdressing, Health & Social Care, ICT, Media, Motor Vehicle, Music, Performance, Public Services, Science, Social Sciences, Sport, Travel & Tourism.

You could study a BTEC at Level 2 or 3, either alongside academic qualifications or as part of a wider programme (such as an apprenticeship). You can also study a BTEC as a standalone course.

There are over 2,000 BTEC qualifications across 16 sectors, including:

- applied science
- art and design
- business
- childcare
- construction
- engineering
- media
- health and social care
- hospitality
- ICT
- land-based

The different types of BTEC

BTECs are broken down into three main levels of study:

1. **BTEC Firsts** are available from entry level to Level 2 (similar standard to GCSEs). These offer an introduction to work in a vocational sector. Combined with other qualifications, these can enable you to go on to further study, to an apprenticeship, or into employment.
2. **BTEC Nationals** are available from Level 3 (similar standard to A levels). Many of these are well regarded by universities, further education colleges, and employers. A BTEC National qualification can lead to employment, continuing study, or professional development programmes.
3. **BTEC Apprenticeships** are available at Levels 2 to 5 across more than 25 sectors.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is where you work with an employer learning the skills of the job in the work place. Whilst doing this you gain a recognised qualification which demonstrates your competence in the job. The theory work and preparation for exams is usually undertaken at a college or training provider premises. Typically, you would spend 4 days a week in the workplace and 1 day a week at a college/training provider.

Apprenticeship qualifications are usually awarded as NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications). These can be at Level 1, 2 or 3 (foundation, intermediate or advanced). As apprenticeships are undertaken in specific skill areas (eg bricklaying, catering, engineering etc), pupils may be required to start at Level 2 even if they have already gained five 9-5 grades at school.



Where do Apprenticeships lead?

Apprenticeships can lead to full employment, further training and qualifications including Higher Education opportunities. For further details on apprenticeships visit: www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

When considering an apprenticeship, it is important to remember that you may be asked to find your own employer. As a result apprenticeships are not guaranteed. You will therefore also need to consider applying for back up options such as a full-time college course and/or a traineeship.

Traineeships

Some training providers will offer 'in house' training at their premises whilst you, or the provider, secures an employer willing to employ you. There may be work experience opportunities involved in traineeships but this will not be paid employment.

Courses at colleges for pupils who do not achieve five 9-4 grades at school

Many colleges offer pupils the chance to take Level 1 or Level 2 courses to help improve their qualification range. For instance, a pupil may choose to take a BTEC Intermediate (Level 2) in a subject that interests them. Since 2014, any pupil NOT gaining a grade C+ or 4 upwards in English and/or Maths is required to retake these at college or as part of an apprenticeship.

