

Post 16 Choices - A leaflet for students, parents, carers and teachers.

The government has increased the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training (Raising of the Participation Age – RPA). All pupils will need to continue in some form of education, training or work with training until their 18th birthday. This does not necessarily mean staying in school; young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16, which could be through:

- Full-time study in a school or college (also known as sixth form) or with a training provider.
- At least 20 hours per week working or volunteering combined with part-time accredited education or training.
- An Apprenticeship.
- A Traineeship.

For further information visit the website <https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school>

College or Sixth Form

College or sixth form is still the most popular option for Year 11 school leavers. There are a vast number of different courses available and many colleges and sixth forms offer **courses for every level of ability**.

Option 1: A Levels and AS Levels are often known as ‘academic qualifications’. They can prepare young people for university, work or apprenticeships. A student would normally pick 3 A level subjects that:

- interest them
- relate to a specific career
- allow them to keep their options open and be flexible.

The **new A level** structure is linear, with all assessments being done at the end of two years of study. Assessment is mainly by exam, with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills and likely to account for no more than 20% of the final grade.

A small number of colleges/sixth forms still offer **AS Level qualifications**; these are high-quality standalone qualification and will be the equivalent to 40% of an A level. AS assessments will take place at the end of the first year and AS level results will **NO LONGER COUNT** towards an A level.

To study A levels students will need at least 5 GCSEs grades 9 to 5/4 including English, maths and science in some cases. Be aware that because of the new number GCSE grading system some colleges are asking for grades 9 to 5 and others are asking for grades 9 to 4 – please check with each establishment. Some subjects will require a higher grade for example a grade 9 to 6 at GCSE for maths or science subjects.

Important things to consider when choosing A levels:

1. This option will always have an external exam as PART OF or ALL the assessment process. Some subjects will be 100% exam; others will be 80% exam and 20% non-exam. It is important to check when visiting the colleges/sixth forms. For some arts- based subjects it may be 60% coursework and 40% controlled assessment.
2. Students must be able to perform well in exam situations, be able to work independently and happy to revise.

Option 2: Vocational or Technical (some examples include BTECs and CTECs) qualifications. They are practical work-related courses which give students the skills they need for a certain industry or even a specific career. These qualifications are nationally recognised, valued by employers and universities and they offer a clear route into employment, apprenticeships and higher education. Students would usually only **choose one course** although some colleges/sixth forms offer the chance to do a mixture of technical qualifications or a mix of A levels and technical qualifications – please check with each establishment. This qualification is offered at a range of levels - 1, 2 or 3. The level students choose to study at will depend on their GCSE results and previous experience. In general, the following applies:

- **Level 3** requires a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 5/4 including English, maths and sometimes science –please check with the college/sixth form.
- **Level 2** requires mainly grade 3 across all GCSEs.
- **Level 1** requires mainly grades 2 to 1 across all GCSEs.

Courses on offer can include Animal Care, Business, Art & Design (different types available), Health & Social Care, Engineering (different branches available), Sport, Outdoor Education, Travel & Tourism, Hospitality & Catering, Public Services, Applied Science are just a few. Check with each college/sixth form to see what's on offer.

Option 3: NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) are very hands-on, practical work-related courses that enable students to demonstrate competency in that job role. These can be in areas such as the construction trades, catering, engineering and hair or beauty. Examples you might study at college:

- City & Guilds Diploma in Professional Cookery or
- VRQ Diploma in Hairdressing or
- City & Guilds Diploma in Plastering

With NVQs there are 3 levels and most people start on Level 1 then progress to Level 3. Sometimes people will complete Level 1 and /or 2 and then complete a Level 3 through an apprenticeship.

Note: As a rule, with options 2 or 3 if you don't achieve your maths and/or English GCSEs at Grade 4 the first time, then students will be required to re-sit these again in addition to their other course(s). The college or sixth form will discuss how this will work with potential students.

Option 4: T Levels are new courses being introduced in a few colleges from September 2020. These 2-year courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work. T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days). They will provide the knowledge and experience needed to open the door into skilled employment, further study or a higher apprenticeship.

Studying for a T Level will take up your full-time study at college/sixth form and will be equivalent to 3 A Levels. Subjects available from September 2020 include digital production, design and development; design, surveying and planning; education.

As with A Levels it is likely that T level entry requirements will be 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 5/4. For further information on T levels, please request a copy of the T-Levels booklet from your career practitioner.

Important points to consider when choosing college or sixth form:

1. **School leavers who achieve at least 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 including English, maths and science, will have the widest choice.** Students who start at a lower level can still work their way up to the higher-level courses. It is important that young people look at the different colleges and sixth forms as they all vary. It is also important to look at the types of courses available and ideally attend at least **3 or 4 open days/evenings**. Where possible young people should **apply before the Christmas holiday in Year 11**, as some colleges and sixth forms have application deadlines and popular courses can fill up early.
2. It is important to remember that **young people can apply to as many colleges and sixth forms as they like!** If a student is not quite sure yet, encourage them to apply to all the colleges and sixth forms they are interested in. This will increase their chances of being offered a place and keep their options open.
3. Young people can accept more than one offer and then make their decision once they are ready or when they get their GCSE results. Colleges and sixth forms also offer taster days to young people who have accepted offers. This is another chance to find out more about the college, sixth form and course before making a final decision. It is better to apply early and turn down places, rather than applying too late and not getting the place they want.



Apprenticeships offer the chance to earn a wage whilst learning. Apprentices will mainly train in the workplace but will also attend college or a specialist training provider as part of their apprenticeship standard (equal to at least 20% of their working week). The main starting point is the website <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>. This site explains what is involved in an apprenticeship, the different levels and types of apprenticeships on offer. You can read case studies that give an insight into the benefits of apprenticeships. On the site www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship you can view apprenticeship opportunities and then use the site to apply for vacancies. Most employers are now encouraged to advertise their apprenticeship vacancies on this government site although many other sites also advertise apprenticeship vacancies.

Entry requirements vary, but for Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeships most employers look for GCSE grades 9 to 4 including at least English, maths and for some jobs a science or technology subject. For Higher or Degree Apprenticeships, A Levels or equivalent qualifications at Level 3 may be required. It is important to look at each apprenticeship's entry requirements. Most students who undertake an apprenticeship after Year 11 (at 16) start on a Level 2 or Intermediate Level.

Apprentices are entitled to the apprentice hourly rate (wage) if they're either:

- aged under 19
- aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship

The current apprentice rate is £3.90 per hour. It should be noted that many employers pay above this hourly rate. Further details about the national minimum hourly rate and the national living wage can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>.

Important points: Apprenticeships are competitive.

Anyone seeking an apprenticeship will need to be well prepared. They should do some research on the company, look at the different roles on offer and think about which one(s) interest them the most. Remember they will be competing against other people for the apprenticeship. Ideally, they should also try and do some work experience or take part in something that allows them to demonstrate they have the skills for that job (for example being the finance director of their Year 11 business enterprise challenge or being the team leader on their Duke of Edinburgh expedition). Doing some preparation will help them demonstrate their interest in the apprenticeship and prepare them for when they get invited for an interview or assessment centre.



A Traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience designed for those aged 16 to 24 focused on giving young people the skills and experience that employers are looking for. It can last up to 6 months and your current qualifications must be below Level 3. At its core is work preparation and training in English and maths for those who need it, alongside a high-quality work experience placement. Traineeships are unpaid, but employers are encouraged to support expenses such as transport and meals depending on a young person's circumstances.

To check whether a person is eligible and whether a Traineeship is the correct route for them visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme>

Employed, Self- Employed or Volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.

Students planning to go straight into employment, self-employment or volunteering need to be aware that it **is not an easy option**. If they are doing any of the above for 20 hours or more a week, they will be required to complete part-time accredited (i.e. that leads to a qualification) education or training. The **minimum hourly rate for 16-17-year olds is currently £4.35**. There are few entry level jobs available and many are now only part time e.g. in retail.

Important points:

1. Students should start looking for work early, research employers well, have a good CV and show enthusiasm for the job.
2. Students will require help to find part-time accredited education or training. Talk to an employer, a school, college/sixth form or career practitioner who will be able to help them.
3. Consider apprenticeships, as these are designed for young people and offer better long-term prospects.

For local and weekly jobs bulletin go to the websites:

<http://access-southampton.co.uk/job-vacancy-and-information-bulletin/>

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/jobs>

<https://www.allaboutschooleavers.co.uk/jobs>

<https://targetcareers.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-your-career/>

<http://www.indeed.co.uk>

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