

Choosing the right course

It is important to get as much advice as possible before making your application. Choosing the right course can be difficult - there are so many different types of qualification available. We want to help you to understand the level of qualification that's right for you.

If you are still not sure, you can:

- Speak to your Careers Officer;
- Speak to your teacher;
- Ask friends or relatives who have been to college;
- Contact the Admissions Office.

Which route?

There are a number of different types of learning routes available to you. You need to consider which might be the best for your needs taking into account your circumstances, interests and predicted grades. The routes are:

- Full-time further education;
 - Apprenticeship;
 - Work-based Learning;
 - Part-time education and work;
- or
- Full-time work.

Which type of course?

If you decide to opt for full-time further education, then you need to make a decision about which type of course you should choose.

This decision should be based on the following criteria:

- Your predicted grades;
- Your preferred learning style;
- Your career intentions;
- The entrance requirements for any university to which you may wish to apply.

In addition you should make sure that you will meet the GCSE requirements for some careers and universities. For example, if you want to be a secondary teacher, you will need to have GCSE English, Maths & Science at grade C or above. If you want to join the RAF officer entry, you must choose A Levels rather than a National Diploma. If you want to study medicine or law, you must study certain subjects. Your careers advisers and local library should have all the information you need about the step after college. Check all the university entrance requirements too.

AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A (Advanced) levels

For some subjects you will need to have some prior knowledge of the subject (or have a GCSE in it) before starting an A or AS level. Other subjects can be studied for the first time at AS level.

A levels are divided into four modules. You get an AS level for completing the first two modules and an A level for completing the full four. An AS level is a qualification in its own right and will help you to get into university. The first two modules are called AS modules and the second two are called A2 modules.

AS and A levels are assessed by examinations and graded from A to E.

BTEC Level 2 and Level 3 Diplomas

BTEC Level 2 and Level 3 Diplomas are an introduction to broad vocational areas, such as engineering or care; or can be linked more to specific jobs, such as hairdressing, or information technology.

Apprenticeship

These are high quality, work-based training programmes. If you decide on an apprenticeship, you will:

- Earn real wages
- Gain new qualifications

If you are applying following a break in schooling, you may wish to consider the following courses:

Choosing between an academic or vocational course

An academic course might suit you if you have no clear job in mind, and just want to get a qualification that shows you've achieved a certain educational standard. They show you have analytical and critical skills - skills you'll need in most jobs.

Many jobs ask for a good standard of education, five GCSEs, good A levels, or a degree. They don't specify particular subjects, they just want evidence of educational achievement.

Some employers prefer practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge. A media studies course will not significantly enhance your chances of getting into employment in the media. Some employers value a practical/vocational course that has given you the skills you need for the job.

Admissions interview

The Admissions interview is designed to provide guidance on your choices and pathways. A separate leaflet is available to give you more detailed advice.