

Introductory information about different Post-16 qualifications



A Levels

A (Advanced) level qualifications focus on traditional study skills and subjects. They normally take 2 years to complete full-time in a sixth form or FE college. Most students take 3 A levels – or they can be studied in combination with other equivalent qualifications such as BTEC L3. While some subjects include a small amount of coursework, the majority of the final grade (80-100%) comes from the exams taken at the end of the course. Coursework is more significant in art & design subjects e.g. fine art, photography etc.

What are AS levels?

An AS (Advanced Subsidiary) Level is worth approximately half an A level and is a separate qualification to the A level. For many years, the AS was part of the A level qualification – but this is no longer the case. It might be possible to take the AS at the end of the first year or

alongside 3 A level subjects, but you would need to check if this is an option, in advance, with the college.

Instead of an AS Level, you may wish to explore an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Offered by most colleges, this is an opportunity to work independently and study an area or topic of interest. Universities look favourably on this qualification that develops independent study skills and provides an excellent preparation for higher level learning.

Entry requirements

In most cases, you need at least five GCSEs at grades 4-9. Sometimes, you need a grade 6 or above at GCSE in a particular subject to take it at A level. Some sixth form and FE colleges also ask that you have GCSE grade 4-5 or above in English and/or maths.

There are many A level subjects available. You can continue with subjects taken at GCSE or take new ones. Some subjects require prior study, some do not.

How do A levels work?

Most universities require 3 A-level grades or equivalent for entry. If you have a very strong GCSE profile, it may be possible to take 4. This is only advisable if the additional work does not impact negatively on the grades of the main three – universities would rather see 3 high grades, than 4 slightly lower ones.

Where A levels lead?

Completing A levels can lead to:

- Employment
- Apprenticeships – Higher or Degree
- Foundation or Bachelor's Degree

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) is an assessed programme for students aged 16 to 19. It is respected by leading universities across the globe. The DP is an academically challenging and balanced programme of education.

What the DP offers students

Through the DP, schools are able to develop students who:

- have excellent breadth and depth of knowledge
- flourish physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically
- study at least two languages
- excel in traditional academic subjects
- explore the nature of knowledge through the programme's unique theory of knowledge course.

How the Diploma Programme works

The curriculum is made up of the DP core and six subject groups.

The three core elements are:

- Theory of knowledge, in which students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we know what we claim to know.

- The extended essay, which is an independent, self-directed piece of research, finishing with a 4,000-word paper.
- Creativity, activity, service, in which students complete a project related to those three concepts.

The six subject groups are:

- Studies in language and literature
- Language acquisition
- Individuals and societies
- Sciences
- Mathematics
- The arts

There are different courses within each subject group.

How is the IBDP Assessed?

The IB uses both external and internal assessment in the DP.

External assessment: Examinations form the basis of the assessment for most courses. This is because of their high levels of objectivity and reliability. They include:

- essays
- structured problems
- short-response questions
- data-response questions
- text-response questions
- case-study questions
- multiple-choice questions – though these are rarely used.

Internal assessment: Teacher assessment is also used for most courses. This includes:

- oral work in languages
- fieldwork in geography
- laboratory work in the sciences
- investigations in mathematics
- artistic performances.

How is the DP assessment is scored?

Students receive grades ranging from 7 to 1, with 7 being highest. Students receive a grade for each DP course attempted.

Admission to UK Higher Education

UK universities and colleges accept the International Baccalaureate Diploma for entry to all first degree courses. Universities may offer places based on the combination of IB subjects, points secured in total and in individual subjects. Requirements will vary depending on the institution and the course.

BTEC and OCR Nationals

If you want to learn more about a particular job or area of work, there are many vocational qualifications you can choose from, like BTEC qualifications and OCR Nationals.

BTEC qualifications and OCR Nationals are particular types of work-related qualifications that are available in a wide range of subjects. Many have been designed in collaboration with industry, so they can equip you with the skills and knowledge that employers are looking for. The qualifications offer a mix of theory and practice and can also include an element of work experience. They can take the form of, or be part of, a technical certificate which are also one of the key components of an apprenticeship.

What you can study

BTECs and OCR Nationals are available in a wide range of subjects which include:

- art and design
- business
- engineering
- health and social care
- information technology
- creative media
- applied law
- applied psychology
- public services
- applied science
- sport or sport science

They can be studied full-time at a Further Education (FE) college, or at sixth form college. They are available at different levels.

Level 1 (one year) – equivalent to GCSE at grade 1-3

Level 2 (one year) – equivalent to GCSEs at grade 4-9

Level 3 (one or two years) – equivalent to A levels

They also come in different sizes. For example, if you study Level 3 at MET in Sport, over the two years, it will be equivalent to 3 A levels. If you study Level 3 at Varndean or BHASVIC, you have the option of studying a Single (worth one A level) or Double (worth 2 A levels), and could combine this with other subjects.

How you are assessed

You'll complete a range of assignments, case studies, practical activities and exams, as well as a portfolio of evidence that shows the work you have completed. You are assessed by your teacher or trainer in your place of study. Depending on the qualification you choose, some assessment may also be done by external examiners.

BTEC and OCR Nationals are graded:

- Pass
- Merit
- Distinction
- Distinction *

Where BTEC and OCR Nationals lead?

Study at Level 1 can progress to Level 2, or into employment or apprenticeships.

Study at Level 2 can progress into Level 3 study, or into employment or apprenticeships.

Studying at Level 3, on their own or in combination with other qualifications such as A levels can lead to;

- Employment
- Apprenticeships
- University – universities are very familiar with BTEC & OCRs and a significant number of young people progress to university using these qualifications

T Levels

T Levels are new courses which follow GCSEs and are equivalent to 3 A levels. These 2-year courses, which launched 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).

What can I study?

By September 2022 or 2023, you should be able to a T Level in the following:

- Accounting
- agriculture, land management and production
- animal care and management
- building services engineering for construction
- catering
- craft and design
- design and development for engineering and manufacturing
- design, surveying and planning for construction
- digital business services
- digital production, design and development
- digital support and services
- education and childcare
- finance
- hair, beauty and aesthetics
- health
- healthcare science
- human resources
- legal
- maintenance, installation and repair for engineering and manufacturing
- management and administration
- engineering, manufacturing, processing and control
- media, broadcast and production
- onsite construction
- science

Structure of a T Level

T Level courses include the following compulsory elements:

1. A technical qualification, which includes

- core theory, concepts and skills for an industry area
- specialist skills and knowledge for an occupation or career
- an industry placement with an employer
- a minimum standard in maths and English if students have not already achieved them

2. Industry placements

Every T Level includes an industry placement with an employer focused on developing the practical and technical skills required for the occupation. These will last a minimum of 315 hours (approximately 45 days) but can last longer. Employers can offer industry placements as a block, day release or a mix of these, and can discuss sharing part of the placement with another employer if necessary.

Grading and certification

Students who complete their T Level will receive an overall grade of pass, merit, distinction or distinction. They will get a nationally recognised certificate which will show their overall grade and a breakdown of what they have achieved.

Students who do not pass all elements of their T Level will get a T Level statement of achievement which will show the elements they have completed.

Where can T Levels Lead?

T Levels will provide several progression options to students. These include skilled employment, an apprenticeship and higher education. To help T Level students get into higher education, UCAS* points will be allocated to T Levels. UCAS points will only be allocated to the overall T Level grade. Students must achieve at least an overall pass grade to receive UCAS points.

Apprenticeships

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 in school, at college or on a traditional degree course, the majority of your learning will be through on-the-job training in your place of work.

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 able to cope with the demands of work and academic study at the same time

As an apprentice you will:

- be employed full-time (min. 30 hours per week – but usually 35-40 hours)
- be an employee earning a wage and getting holiday pay
- work alongside experienced staff
- gain job-specific skills

- get time for training and study related to your role (at least 20% of your normal working hours)

Some apprenticeships may also give you an additional qualification, such as a diploma or degree.

How long to apprenticeships take to complete?

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

If you feel you're not ready for an apprenticeship, a traineeship is a course designed to prepare you for one.

Levels of apprenticeship

Apprenticeships have equivalent educational levels.

	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A level
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

Who can start an apprenticeship?

To start an apprenticeship, you'll need to be:

- 16 or over
- not in full-time education

You can apply for an apprenticeship while you're still at school (usually in the spring/summer term) but you'll need to be 16 or over by the end of the summer holidays to start the apprenticeship. If you are aged 16, you can start your apprenticeship after the last Friday in June of Year 11.

You must have an offer of employment in place to be an apprentice. The qualifications and experience required will vary according to the job role, industry and employer. Most higher and degree apprenticeships require prior study at Level 3 e.g. A levels or BTEC L3, or completion of an Advanced apprenticeship.

Are apprenticeships an easy option?

No! 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. 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, or university.

For videos and further information, please refer to our Apprenticeship page: [apprenticeships \(dorothy-stringer.co.uk\)](http://dorothy-stringer.co.uk/apprenticeships)

Job-related Qualifications (Levels 1-3)

Some qualifications are designed to prepare you for a specific role or job e.g. plumbing, beauty therapy, estate agency. The qualification title may vary according to where you complete them – you could be at work (as part of an apprenticeship) or at a college.

Job-related qualifications at work...

Work-based qualifications, such as NVQs, recognise the skills and knowledge a person needs to do a job. The candidate needs to demonstrate and prove their competency in their chosen role or career path. NVQs and similar qualifications are often completed as part of an apprenticeship.

Learners take about one year to complete an NVQ at Level 2 and around two years for an NVQ at level 3. Within reason (and with the agreement of your employer), there is no maximum time limit in which to complete an NVQ as they are designed to be taken at a pace that suits your needs.

Competency? Candidates need to demonstrate that they have the suitable skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out the tasks associated with their job role.

What are the benefits of undertaking an NVQ?

For the individual they provide:

- A flexible route to becoming qualified in the workplace
- A practical demonstration of the individual's skills, knowledge and understanding
- Certification to demonstrate you have met a national standard for an occupational role
- Improved employability and transferability
- Access to recognised qualification for employees with no other formal education

How are NVQs assessed?

NVQs are competency based and the candidate produces evidence of what they do in their work situation which becomes the basis of a portfolio that is assessed against the relevant occupational standard. The candidates must demonstrate that their skills are current and prove their competency over a period.

You cannot fail an NVQ. You are either classed as competent, or not yet competent, which means you would need to provide additional or further evidence over a period.

Other qualifications

There are many other types of work-based, technical and professional qualifications and their assessment methods may vary. Please ask for further information if you know which career or job you wish to pursue.

Job-related qualifications at a college

If you know what job you want to do, but aren't quite ready for the world of work or don't have an employer yet, then you may want to start at college on a progression award, certificate, diploma or other vocational award - there are a number of different names for them. These awards are designed for people who can't take an NVQ or similar award. (NVQs are usually only available to you if you're currently employed).

- They are classroom-based awards that will help you learn the knowledge and skills you would need to do a job.
- The classroom may closely resemble your future work setting e.g. a construction workshop, a salon – but there will be tutor and support staff on hand to assist you with your learning
- They're assessed in a number of ways: assignments, practical tests, written exams or even online multiple-choice tests – depending on the job role.
- These are an ideal way to improve your knowledge and prepare you for your future career.

What qualifications could I take?

- There are various job-related qualifications to choose from which cover the majority of employment sectors and industries, including:
- business and management
- sales, marketing and distribution
- health care
- food, catering and leisure services
- construction and property
- manufacturing, production and engineering

Where can job-related qualifications lead?

These qualifications are a great way to progress in the world of work – gaining further skills and responsibility. Some qualifications (at Level 3 or higher) can be used to progress into higher education (e.g. for an HND or Foundation Degree) but this is usually limited to courses which are closely aligned to your job role. You may need other qualifications if you want change direction or have more choice for your future studies.