



National Forest Hub

Guide to Post-16 Pathways



Introduction

What your child chooses to do after Year 11 can have a big impact on their future.

The choices they make now will influence how easily they will be able to get a job or enter further education when they are older.

The main options at this stage are for them to go on to full time education or take an apprenticeship/training.

Things they need to consider are the type of qualification they are going to study; what type of learning suits them best (classroom or practical); and which subjects they enjoy. If they already know the career path they're hoping to take, they may want to choose subjects that offer a more obvious route to that career. In theory that can make choosing subjects easier, but sometimes there's a conflict in the subjects they enjoy and do well at versus the subjects they will need. Of course, they can also go straight into employment, but this must include some guided learning hours.

There's much more choice at sixth form than GCSE, so there will be many subjects available

that are new to them. Don't worry about them taking something they have never studied and then finding out they don't enjoy it or aren't good at it; they can make changes at the start of Y12. The most usual way forward is for them to stay on at school or go to college and take either A levels or BTECs. This usually works well for students that enjoy being in the classroom.

However, if your child learns more easily through practical experience (rather than in theory), they might achieve better results and be happier by taking a different route towards a career. Don't rule out an option because it's not one you know. We'll outline all their choices in this guide.

It's important to bear in mind that whatever they choose to do after GCSE, whilst it will influence Post-18 options, it will not close any doors. If they make a mistake, there's still plenty of opportunity to change direction (of course, this may take a little additional work on their part). Even if they go straight into an apprenticeship and change their mind later, there's always the chance to go back to full time study further down the line

Important Information

Post-16 studies are very different from studying for GCSE. They go into each subject in much more depth, there is more information to absorb, and the teaching style starts to transition to independent learning (researching and finding out for themselves rather than being told).

A minimum standard of English and Maths is required for all courses, but help is provided where needed, like the option to retake alongside some college courses. As of September 2020, the new T Level qualification was introduced. Subject choices at T Level continue to expand. It is likely that schools and colleges will begin to focus on T Lev-

el, A level and BTEC as the preferred qualification choices and so other qualifications may be phased out gradually.

This guide offers a brief summary of all the options your child might want to consider for sixth form and how this might impact their choices after Year 11.





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Click [here](#) for Gov website updates around Post 16 options

Qualification Type	Type of Learning	Entry	Subject choices	Length of time	Can lead to	For more info	
A levels	General certificate of Advances level qualification	Mostly Theory	Usually 5x GCSE grade 4s. At least grade 5/6 in the subjects	Three subjects	2 years full time	University, further study, training or work	Go to page 6
BTEC Nationals	Business and Technology Education and Council Diplomas	Combination of practical and theory	Up to 5 GCSEs	Three vocational subjects	2 years full time	University, further study, training or work	Go to page 6
Cambridge Technicals	A Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (equivalent to one A level) Or Cambridge Technical Diploma (equivalent to 2x A levels)	Practical course with lots of course-work based on real life case studies	At least 5x GCSE passes	Range of vocational subjects	2 years	University, further study, training or work	Go to page 8
International Baccalaureate	International Baccalaureate Diploma	Mostly theory, some practical.	Set by the school.	Up to six subjects (three standard level, three higher level plus a compulsory	2 years full time	University, further study, training or work	Go to page 8

	Type of Qualification	Type of Learning	Entry	Subject choices	Length of time	Can lead to	For more info
T-Levels	Technical Level Qualification	80% Classroom learning, 20% industry placement	Up to 5 GCSEs	One industry field	2 years full time	University, further study, training or work	Go to page 7
Apprenticeships	Advanced (Level 3) equal to 2x A levels Or intermediate (Level 2) equivalent to GCSE	Work based learning including off-site working	Depends on employer, some require at least 3 GCSEs	Range of vocational subjects, driven by the job offered.	1-2 years	University, further study, training or work	Go to page 7
Other qualifications	City and Guilds; National Vocational Qualifications NVQs;	Depends on the qualification, most contain practical on the job training	5x GCSE passes	Range of vocational subjects	2 years (level 3)	Further study, training professional development programmes or work.	Go to page 9
Other options	Traineeship; Volunteering with training if needed skills and experience to get onto course or apprenticeship .	Work based	None	Range of vocational subjects driven by job offered	6 weeks–6 months	Further study, training or job offers	Go to page 9

A Levels

Qualification type: General Certificate of Advanced Level qualification

Type of learning: Mostly theory

Qualifications needed to sign up:

At least 5 GCSEs grades 4 - 9

At least grade 5/6 in the subject/s chosen for A level (requirements may vary between schools)

Subject choices: Three subjects

Length of commitment: 2 years full time

Tuition costs: Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing:

56 points – A*

48 points – A

40 points – B

32 points – C

24 points – D

Can lead to: University, further study, training or work

Things to consider: If your child chooses to study a subject for Y12 only, they can take an examination and obtain an AS level which counts as 40% of an A level. AS levels count towards UCAS points, ranging from 20 points (A grade) through 6 points (E grade). Additionally, many schools offer the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) which is a dissertation or project created on the basis of independent research and worth between 8 and 28 UCAS points.

If your child is worried about taking a subject they have not done before, please reassure them. They can find out before they start how to prepare to the start of their A Level lessons.

BTEC Nationals

Qualification type: Business and Technology Education Council Diplomas (Level 3 are similar standard to A Levels, with subsidiary diploma equivalent to one A level, BTEC diploma equivalent to 2 A levels and extended diploma equivalent to 3 A levels).

Type of learning: Combination of practical and theory

Qualifications needed to sign up: Up to 5 GCSEs

Subject choices: Up to three vocational subjects
Length of commitment: 2 years full time

Tuition costs: Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass)

Can lead to: University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

Things to consider: BTECs offer the chance of earning the same points for UCAS as A levels, but provide a way to learn through much more practical application and coursework whereas A levels focus on written work and exams.

However, some universities have a preference for A levels over BTEC, so if your child has their heart set on a specific university or course, it's worth checking their entry requirements to see whether this will influence their sixth form choices. As of 2024, the Government plans to reduce funding for qualifications outside A level, T Level and apprenticeships, so it is likely BTECs will be phased out

T-Levels

Qualification type: Technical Level Qualification

Type of learning: Classroom learning (80%) with industry placement (20%)

Qualifications needed to sign up: Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs

Subject choices: Launched with three subjects in September 2020, as of September 2022 there are 15 subjects available including accounting, building services engineering for construction, digital business services, education and childcare, finance, health, management and administration, on-site construction and science.

Further expansion will take place in 2023

Length of commitment: 2 years full time

Tuition costs: Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing:

168 points – Distinction*

144 points – Distinction

120 points – Merit

96 points – Pass (C or above)

72 points – Pass (D or E)

Can lead to: University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

Things to consider: T Levels offer a mixture of classroom learning with an on-the-job placement equating to 20% of the course time with a view to students obtaining the right technical skills to get ahead in their chosen industries

Apprenticeships

Qualification type: Technical Level Qualification

Type of learning: Work based learning with one day a week at college, some can be 100% work based learning.

Qualifications needed to sign up: Decided by employer

Subject choices: Dependent on employer vacancy

Length of commitment: Dependent on employer

Tuition costs: Free

UCAS points awarded for passing:

Dependent on qualification studied

Can lead to: University, further study, training, professional development programmes or work

Things to consider: Apprenticeships offer a mixture of paid 'on the job' learning with an college course for 20% of the course time (usually one day a week) with a view to students obtaining the right technical skills to work in their chosen industries.

	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A level
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above

To search and apply for apprenticeships go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

Cambridge Technicals

Qualification type: A Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate (equivalent to an A level) or Cambridge Technical Diploma (equivalent to x2 A levels)

Type of learning: Practical course with lots of coursework based on real life case studies

Qualifications needed to sign up: At least 5 GCSEs

Subject choices: Range of vocational subjects

Length of commitment: 2 years

Tuition costs: Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing Cambs Tech level 3: 56 points – D* (distinction) 48 points – D 32 points – M (merit) 16 points – P (pass)

Can lead to: University, further study, training or work

Things to consider: With examination marks split 50%-50% between coursework and examinations, the Cambridge Technicals offer a very practical route to learning, but students must be well-organised, able to handle lots of projects at once and be able to meet deadlines in order to succeed. Extended certificate can sometimes be offered in conjunction with A levels.

International Baccalaureate

Qualification type: International Baccalaureate Diploma

Type of learning: Mostly theory, some practical
Qualifications needed to sign up: Set by the school, up to 5 GCSEs (grades 4-9)

Subject choices: Up to six subjects (three standard level and three at higher level)

Length of commitment: 2 years full time

Tuition costs: Free (unless parents choose to pay privately)

UCAS points awarded for passing: 56 points – Higher Level 7 48 points – Higher Level 6 32 points – Higher Level 5 24 points – Higher Level 4 12 points – Higher Level 3

Can lead to: University, further study, training, or work

Things to consider: The international Baccalaureate is mostly offered through private schools, although there are a small number of state schools where it is available. The International Baccalaureate Organisation (“IBO”) does not inspect schools once they have been approved to run IB, believing that results reflect standards, so it’s important to check recent results

For more information about the International Baccalaureate go to:

<https://www.ibo.org/>

Suggested Websites

Apprenticeships: Search and apply

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

PS16: Search the Leicester and Leicestershire area for pathway and course information.

<https://www.ps16.co.uk/>

National Careers Service: Updated guidelines around Post 16 pathways, including new T level subjects offered and other qualifications and schemes available.

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/career-choices-at-16>

UCAS: View entry requirements of University Courses

<https://digital.ucas.com/coursedisplay/results/courses>

Sixth Form and College websites: Find out pathway information and register for open events

Ashby Sixth Form

<https://www.ashbyschool.org.uk/sixth-form-information>

Burton & South Derbyshire College

<https://www.bsdc.ac.uk/>

Derby College

<https://www.derby-college.ac.uk/>

Loughborough College

<https://www.loucoll.ac.uk/>

Leicester College

<https://leicestercollege.ac.uk/>

Stephenson College (part of SMB College Group)

<https://www.smbcollegegroup.ac.uk/>

How can I support my child?

- ◆ Speak to your child about what areas of subjects they enjoy/want/need, ask them how they want to learn next year, in a classroom, on the job, or a mixture? You may also want to discuss travel and other logistical factors to consider.
- ◆ Visit open day and evening events to see what's on offer.
- ◆ Have a look at the recommended websites to gain information about different courses and pathways
- ◆ If they have got an idea of what career they would like to pursue, see if they can gain some work experience or shadow someone in that industry.
- ◆ Encourage your child to ask for a careers appointment in school.
- ◆ If your child is considering taking on a specific subject at A level which they have not taken as an option, encourage them to speak to a relevant subject teacher about what to expect. If this is not possible, contact the subject leader directly.

FAQs

How can my child decide what they want to do?

It depends, they can continue learning what they enjoy, what they need (for the future) or what they want to do. It is also worth thinking about how they will learn. Are they learning best in a classroom or by doing something, or a mix of both? Open days/evenings can support you and your child to understand the different ways of learning available Post-16 and seeing in them in action can support their decision.

When does my child need to apply for their chosen pathway?

Sixth Forms usually have the shortest window of application and that will be specified on their website. It is recommended that college applications should be made by at least 31st January. Apprenticeships are ongoing, and like a job advert it will state on the vacancy when the planned start date is. It is recommended to apply for a college course during the Autumn term, and then search and apply for apprenticeships when vacancies appear for the Summer which is usually around Spring time. This is so that if an apprenticeship does not materialise, the college can support your child in securing an apprenticeship when they are on roll with them.

I have a business and can offer an apprenticeship, what do I need to do?

If your child wants to take an apprenticeship with you, it will need to be affiliated with a college or education provider, where they will complete (usually) one a day a week there. Please reach out to local colleges, they often have information on their websites for employers.

How many options can my child apply for?

In theory, as many as they like! Do be careful when applying for multiple courses to the same provider though, as it may appear that your child is not certain on what they would like to do, so they will get in touch to ensure the course is right for them, and this can slow the application process down. It is recommended to apply for two options as a minimum, so there is a back-up option available.

How does my child apply for their pathway next year?

For Leicester and Leicestershire Sixth form and colleges, you can apply via PS16 which will be used in school to support your child with their application. If it is out of area, e.g Burton College, your child will need to apply directly on their website. Apprenticeships are usually applied for through Gov.uk, although it is always worth asking and calling local employers to check for any opportunities there. The weekly careers bulletin will also contain local vacancies when they are available. Apprenticeship vacancies can also be posted on college websites, however, please be mindful that apprenticeships listed under courses are not a full apprenticeship, and an employer will need to be found for the work placement to run alongside the day a week at college.

For any other queries, please email erayns@lifemultiacademytrust.org.uk