

Learning after Year 11

Full-time education

What you study depends on your long term plans and the grades you leave Year 11 with:

Academic studies. If you enjoy studying and do well at exams, a two-year programme of **GCE A level** subjects could be the right choice for you. Students normally choose four subjects in the first year (AS), continuing three to the second year (A2). You may be able to combine A level subjects with some BTEC subjects (see below). You will need to achieve at least 5 GCSEs at grade C or above, though most 6th Forms and colleges will ask for more than this minimum. This means you could be asked for GCSEs at minimum grade B in subjects you wish to continue from GCSE to A level, or subjects relevant to those that are new to you at A level. In addition you may have to attain a minimum average grade GCSE grade.

A possible alternative to A level study, available at some schools and colleges, is the **International Baccalaureate**, in which study of science, languages and humanities are compulsory.

Vocational studies. If you are interested in learning about a general career area, but not yet ready to train for a specific job, you might be interested in a “vocational” course, available in subjects like business, engineering, health & social care, etc. These include **BTEC** and **GCE Applied A level double award** programmes. BTECs are available at different levels, up to the A-Level equivalent Advanced/ Level 3, and your final grades will depend on course work and assignments rather than exams. Applied A levels have some exams, but not as many as traditional A level subjects.

For a two-year Advanced/Level 3 vocational programme, which could get you into university as well as lead on to a job, you will usually be asked for at least 4 GCSEs at C or above (or equivalent): usually these would need to include at least a C in English or maths, depending on the subject you want to study.

If you do not get at least 4 C grades, you will start on a one year course. If you have some D grades (usually including English and/or maths) you could be offered Level 2; with lower grades, Level 1 is more likely. If you need a lot of support for your studies, you could start at Entry Level.

Occupational qualifications. If you know what job you want to do, a full-time job-specific course is one way to start getting qualified. Examples of these courses are CACHE (childcare), ILEX (legal work), AAT (accounts) and IMI (motor vehicle repair). What level you study at can depend on your existing skills as well as your exam grades.

GCSE re-sits. 6th Forms and colleges usually offer the opportunity to re-sit English and maths to students studying other subjects if they have not got a C grade or above already, but only a few offer the opportunity to take full-time course in a range of GCSE subjects. You would usually need at least a few D grades from school to be offered a place, and some colleges ask for some Cs.

Work-based learning

Apprenticeships are jobs with the opportunity to get qualifications that prove you can do the work. The main qualification is an NVQ (National vocational Qualification). Most Apprentices start at NVQ Level 2, the level of basic competence in a job, though school leavers who have the right level of qualifications and skill may be able to start an Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3) Employers want to choose the best person for the job, so there is competition for places. Some require specific GCSEs from school leavers (which could include English and maths at grade C or above), and the selection process could also involve an assessment of English and maths ability. Many school-leavers find that getting an Apprenticeship is easier after some extra time in full-time education or in pre-Apprenticeship training (see the information about Traineeships

below). Because of the competition for places, it is a good idea to have a college course as a back-up plan even if an Apprenticeship is your first choice.

Traineeships (pre-Apprenticeship training) is available to help you if you need more qualifications and/or experience to progress to an Apprenticeship. Traineeships last up to six months and include at least six weeks work experience. They can also include qualifications in English and maths, help with applications and interviews and possibly a basic occupational qualification (for example NVQ Level 1),.

Below is a table that summarises the **entry levels for full-time study**, with progression possibilities:

Qualification Level	Normal length	Typical entry requirements	Progression possibilities
3	2 years	Minimum 4 GCSEs at C or above; English and/or maths may be specified. For A level study , more will be required: at least 5 GCSEs at grade C usually with a grade average higher than C and/or B grade or above in specific subjects.	Higher education (university level), training or employment (including Apprenticeships)
2	1 year	Variable, but some grades Ds will usually be required, and English and/or maths may be specified.	Level 3 studies, training or employment (including Apprenticeships).
1	1 year	Often no specific entry requirements, but level of English and maths will be assessed.	Level 2 studies, training or employment (possibly including Apprenticeships).
Entry	variable	No specific requirements.	Level 1 studies or training.