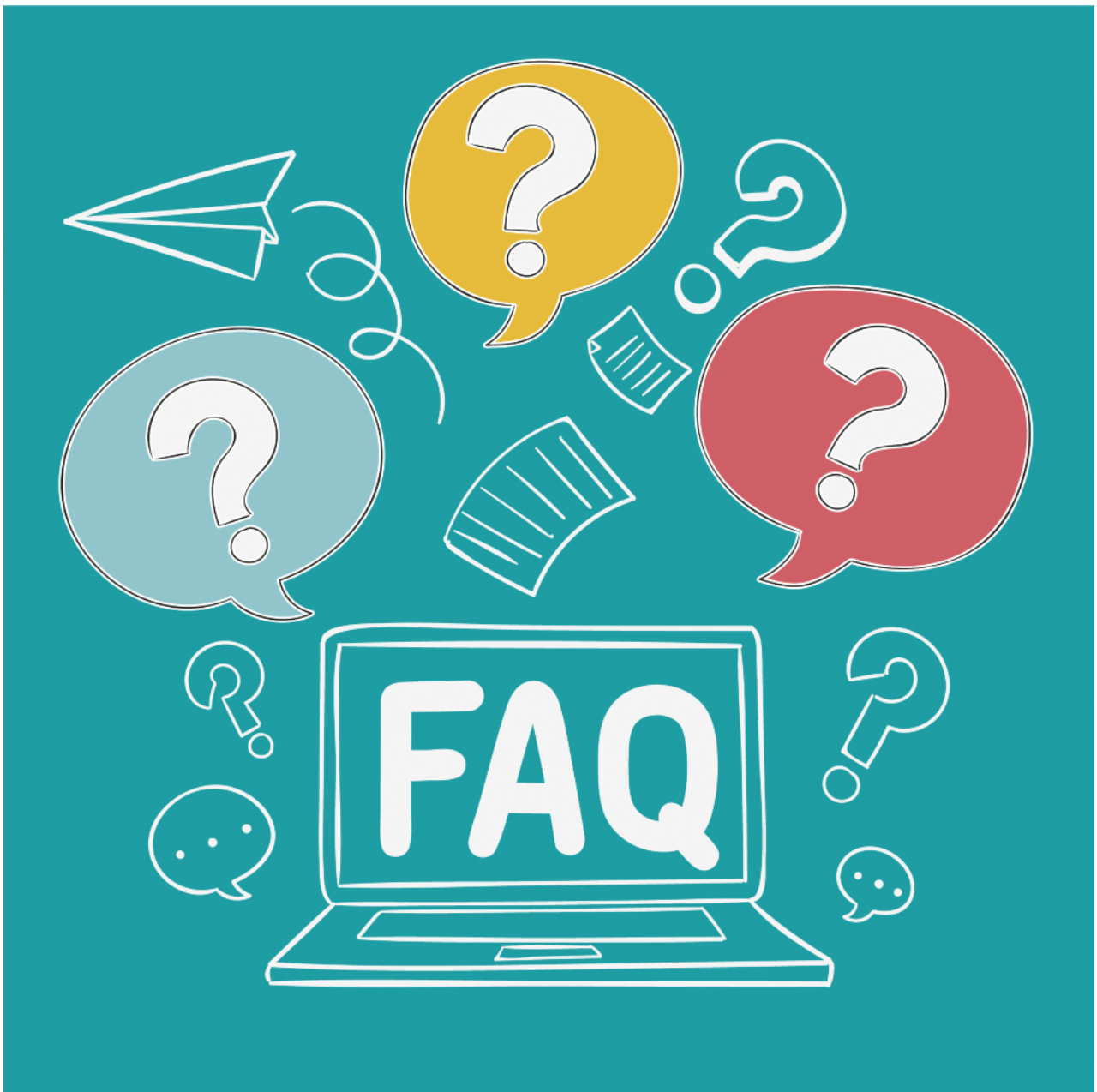


The ultimate guide to

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS



*Everything you need to know about
applying to college, deadlines,
interviews and next steps*

When do I need to apply?

You need to start applying right away - and definitely before Christmas. College interviews will start in January and you need to be on the list. Popular courses will start to fill up quickly, so don't leave it too late.

How do I do this?

All the colleges have online applications. Go to the college link (back page) and click 'APPLY NOW'. The application form will ask you a series of questions: contact details such as telephone and email address, plus the GCSEs you are currently studying. Year of entry is 2026.

What if I don't know what I want to do?

You will need to choose a course or subject(s) - but you can change your mind about this at any time up to enrolment in August 2026! All you are doing at this point is reserving a place at a college.

How many colleges should I apply to?

You need to have at least a Plan B, if not a Plan C as well. Anything can happen between now and August - you might move house or go to the new student day and hate the college you have picked. The college may cancel the course due to lack of interest or staffing issues or the funding could be withdrawn, leaving you high and dry.

I know which college I want to go to - why do I need to apply anywhere else?

As above, the course you have your heart set on at a particular college might be cancelled or withdrawn. You might not get the GCSE grades you need - but another college may have different entry requirements. You might even just change your mind!

Aren't all colleges the same?

Every college has a slightly different offering. Some only offer vocational options, some specialise in A Levels. Some are very specialised (Myerscough for example) while others set their own unique entry requirements using a points system based on your eight best GCSE grades.

What if I don't know what GCSE grades I will get?

At this stage, nobody knows exactly what GCSE grades they will get in August 2026. However, you should have an idea of the grades you are predicted to get, if you continue to work hard, go to all revision sessions and attend school regularly. Do not use your current working-at grades as you may not have even finished the course yet, so can't reflect your final performance 6 or 7 months from now. Do not undersell yourself - you are all aiming for a Level 3 qualification, whether that's an A Level, a T Level or a BTEC.

What's the difference between A Level, T Level and BTECs?

- An A Level is a purely classroom based subject, with a series of exams at the end of 2 years. You would normally take 3 A Levels (some exceptions apply)
- A T Level is 80% classroom based with an exam at the end of the 2 years, and with 20% of the course based in a workplace. You will be set a project that will be marked Pass, Merit or Distinction. The overall grade is P, M or D and is equivalent to 3 A Levels.
- A BTEC (or similar vocational course such as NCFE) is much more practical in approach, with assessment taking place throughout the course as each module is completed. Grades are Pass, Merit or Distinction and you can end up with D*D*D* - equivalent to three A* at A Level.



What if I want to do an apprenticeship?

If you are considering an apprenticeship - this is something you need to find for yourself, although colleges can help. Register on Gov.UK (see back page for details). However, you must also apply for a full time college course, just in case you don't find a vacancy before September.

When are the interviews for college?

College interviews start in January. Wigan & Leigh College and Preston College will be interviewing in school, but for all other colleges, you will be invited to an interview in the evening. Runshaw College interview evening is 9th February - keep an eye on your college emails for dates for all other college interviews. Applying alone is not enough to secure your place at college, you must attend the interview to accept the place (apart from Newman, who don't interview).

What do I need to bring to an interview?

You don't need to bring anything to a college interview, although you may wish to bring a recent tracker or any certificates that you have been awarded. It will be an informal 10-15 minute chat to ascertain that you are choosing a sensible option and to check all your contact information, in advance of enrolment day. You do not need to let any college know that you are not going there, the fact that you don't enrol will be sufficient evidence!

Will I get a place at college?

If you have applied, had an interview and accepted your offer, then you will have a place. However, it is important to note that this is a conditional offer, dependent on you getting the GCSEs you claimed. If you do not get the GCSE grades you need, you may be offered an alternative course, but this will likely be a vocational course, possibly at L3, but could be L2 or even L1 (and not necessarily in the subject area you wanted). This is why it is vital to have a back up plan (course, college, apprenticeship).

What happens next?

Colleges will communicate with you via email or text, depending on what you specified at the interview. Make sure you check regularly as you will be sent lots of information: how to enrol, an invitation to a new student day in July, details of bus passes or bursaries and so on.

What if I don't get the GCSE grades I need - or I do better than I expected?

If you do better than expected in your GCSEs you may wish to choose a different option to that which you originally specified - perhaps A Levels or a T Level rather than a BTEC. Likewise, be prepared to choose a different course if your GCSEs are disappointing. It's worth having an idea in mind just in case, rather than being confronted with options you haven't researched on enrolment day.

What can I do if I hate the college or course I've picked?

If you have applied and accepted another college as a back up option, and end up hating the one you are currently attending, you may be able to appeal. If the back up college has spaces, you may be able to transfer, as they have all your details already.

If it's just the course or subjects you are not keen on, then you have three weeks in to the first term to change to another option, as long as there are spaces available.



Turn over for links to all the colleges plus apprenticeship and training providers

Colleges

Blackburn College: <https://blackburn.ac.uk/apply>

Bolton College: <https://www.boltoncollege.ac.uk/course-type/16-18/>

Bolton Sixth Form: <https://www.bolton-sfc.ac.uk/apply/how-to-apply/>
(deadline for applications: 30 January)

Cardinal Newman College: <https://www.cardinalnewman.ac.uk/apply-now/admissions>
(deadline for applications: 10 February)

Myerscough College: <https://www.myerscough.ac.uk/courses/further-education/how-to-apply/>

Preston College: <https://www.preston.ac.uk/online-application/>

Runshaw College: <https://runshaw.ac.uk/study-at-runshaw/apply/>

St John Rigby College: <https://sjr.ac.uk/admissions/how-to-apply/>

Wigan & Leigh College: <https://www.wigan-leigh.ac.uk/application-form/>

Winstanley College: <https://www.winstanley.ac.uk/121/application-process>
(deadline for applications: 6 February)

MPCT (Roll on roll off programme): <https://mpct.co.uk/location/chorley/#find-a-location>



Don't forget to check the entry requirements and application deadline dates for individual colleges

Apprenticeship and Training Providers

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

Training 2000: <https://www.training2000.co.uk/>

Alliance Learning: <https://www.alliancelearning.com/page/apply-online>

North Lancs Training Group: <https://www.nltg.co.uk/candidate-dashboard/candidate-registration/>

BAE Systems: <https://careers.baesystems.com/locations/uk/apprentices>
Applications open in November 2025 and the advice is to apply early.

MBDA: <https://www.mbdacareers.co.uk/early-careers/apprenticeships>
Applications are open now.

Leyland Trucks: <https://www.leylandtrucksLtd.co.uk/en-gb/working-at-leyland-trucks/apprenticeship>
Applications open in January 2026.

You can set up an account at Gov.UK at any time. You can only start an apprenticeship after 30 June 2026, if you are 16 by then. However, you can search for and apply to a vacancy well before that date, as interview and selection processes sometimes take quite a while.