**Understanding Courses and Qualifications Offered at College and / or Sixth Form**

Main courses offered are **A Levels** and **Vocational**

**A Levels**

* Offered in similar subjects to those studied at GCSE, for example; English, Maths, Geography
* New subjects also offered at A level, for example; Law, Psychology, Sociology
* To progress on to study A levels you will need a **minimum** of **5 GCSE’s level 9-4** to include English and Maths. **Most colleges will be asking for higher entry than this, for example 2 level 6’s and the remainder at least level 4/5+ (you must check with the individual college / sixth form to find out their exact entry requirements). It is also worth noting that depending on the A Level subjects chosen, you may need a level 6 or above from specific subject(s) studied at GCSE level**
* You will generally choose 3 / 4 A level subjects to study
* Teaching and assessment will be similar to that of GCSE – written work with exams as part of the assessment process

**Reasons for choosing the A level route**

* You enjoy the way GCSE’s are taught and assessed and would like to carry learning in this style with your subjects of choice
* For your future career you need particular subjects (e.g. Chemistry and Biology for medicine)
* You might be somewhat undecided about the career path you want to follow and so by choosing a broad range of subjects this could keep your career options more open

**Vocational Courses**  - Examples of vocational courses include BTEC, NVQ’s and **NEW** ‘**T Level’**

* Will be more work related, i.e. they will link into an area(s) of work. For example, students choosing the vocational Health and Social Care course may be considering nursing or social work as career paths, or those looking towards a Motor Vehicle Maintenance course would do so in order to gain the qualifications necessary to work as a mechanic
* Vocational courses tend to be more practical so you would gain “hands on” experience
* Assessment is generally through coursework, projects and assignments (some exams are now being introduced)
* Entry requirements will vary given that vocational courses are offered at different levels. Whatever grades you achieve from school, the college will start you on the right level of course for you. You can work your way up through the levels
* Generally you choose one vocational course to study.

**T Levels**

* New qualification offered in various course areas (Engineering, Education, Construction, Digital, Healthcare, Health Sciences, Cyber Security and Business, plus more to be added each academic year) that will combine theory, practical skills and an industry placement
* Offered as a Level 3 qualification therefore meaning entry will be a minimum of 5 GCSE’s grade 4+ to include Maths and English (possibly Science as well depending on the T level chosen). Also “Transition Programme” into the T Level available for those students who have achieved slightly below GCSE grade 4.

**Apprenticeships**

* ​Apprenticeships have changed in recent years. They used to be associated with trade industries, like construction and plumbing. There are now apprenticeships available ​in a [range of sectors and job roles](https://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk/apprenticeships) such as finance, retail and law.
* New frameworks have been developed by the government, in partnership with employers across various sectors, to provide a pathway for young people to gain professional skills and start a career. These new type of apprenticeships are a combination of real work and academic study.
* An apprentice will receive on-the-job training, as they study towards qualifications. An apprentice receives a salary for the duration of the scheme. The minimum wage for apprentices is £4.30 per hour. It might seem low, but many employers pay above the minimum rate.
* Essentially, an apprenticeship is an opportunity for you to earn while you learn.

Apprenticeships are divided into four tiers:

* **INTERMEDIATE**    (level 2)
* **ADVANCED**    (level 3)
* **HIGHER** (level 4/5/6)
* **DEGREE**   (level 6/7)

Once you have finished your GCSEs, you will be able to apply for an intermediate or advanced apprenticeship.

**INTERMEDIATE (LEVEL 2)**

**LENGTH OF SCHEME *-*** 12-18 months

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS -** *​*Two or more GCSE passes, preferably including English and Maths

**​OR** A completed traineeship (see below)

​**QUALIFICATIONS​** ​- knowledge based qualification (BTEC or National Vocational Qualification) **AND** - Level 2 Competence Qualification

These qualifications are considered to be equivalent to 5 GCSE passes.

​​**ADVANCED (LEVEL 3)**

**LENGTH OF SCHEME -** 18-24 months

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

Minimum of 5 GCSE passes, including English and Maths **OR​** a completed intermediate apprenticeship (in a role similar to the job on offer)

​**QUALIFICATIONS​**  - knowledge based qualification (related to the job role) **AND** - Level 3 Competence Qualification

These qualifications are the equivalent of 2 A levels.*​*

**HIGHER (LEVEL 4/5)**

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

Higher level apprentices’ are usually 18 and over.

Entry requirements will vary, but usually people who have already done an [Advanced Apprenticeship](http://www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk/articles/article/64/advanced-apprenticeships) or who have a minimum of two A-levels will be eligible for a Higher Apprenticeship.

**DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS (LEVEL 5/6)**

​Degree apprenticeships are the newest tier of the modern apprenticeship, and have been developed through a collaboration between UK universities and the Tech Partnership.

​A degree apprentice works on a full-time basis for a company, while they study towards a Bachelor's or Master’s degree.

These schemes can last anywhere between​ 3-6 years, and candidates receive a salary for the duration.

​Tuition costs are covered by the government and the employer.

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**SPONSORED DEGREE PROGRAMMES**

If a company accepts you on to their sponsored degree programme, you will be treated as a​permanent employee.

​An employer will design a scheme in partnership with a university or higher education institution. Candidates have their university fees paid for by their employer in the form of a bursary or scholarship, and receive a salary for the duration of the scheme.

**Reasons for choosing the vocational/T level/Apprenticeship route**

* Able to focus on the course that links directly to your career choice (always check entry requirements for your career choice to ensure your chosen course / subject is the right one)
* Allows you to gain practical experience and build your qualifications as you work through the course
* Hands on learning suits you
* Spending time learning away from college with employers appeals to your learning style
* Teaching, learning and assessment style suits you
* Being paid to learn(apprenticeships)

**Traineeships**

* Traineeships are short, flexible education schemes ​designed for school leavers who do not have the qualifications, skills or work experience required to go straight into employment. Each scheme is designed to help a young person develop the crucial skills that will help them find a career. A traineeship can last anywhere between six weeks to six months - as long as it takes to make a candidate more employable.