

POST 16 FAQs

Parents - Getting them started

Get the information they need

- Make sure you understand everything your child needs to know before making post-16 choices.
- Look at the qualifications available after GCSEs
- Research some job ideas by looking at career and job families
- Find out about how and when to apply for courses

Help them to plan

- It's never too early to start planning — the last term of Year 10 and first term of Year 11 is an ideal time to get research underway.
- Plan to go to open days and evenings — these usually start in October or November and are a great opportunity to visit the different schools, colleges and training providers in your area.
- You can usually start applying for courses in October and November in Year 11. The application window usually remains open until the end of the spring term.
- Look into what funding may be available to your child.

Parents - Getting them started

Will my child get career advice at school?

- Yes. Every Year 11 student will receive a 1-2-1 career interview with a career advisor. During these interview, students will:
 - Discuss the different post 16 pathways
 - Look at the qualifications available after GCSEs
 - Be guided to useful websites
 - Be given a list of the college application deadline
 - Receive a personalised Action Plan which will be emailed to them and attached to their Grofar profile

How many colleges can students apply for?

Students can apply for as many as they like, however we always advise to apply to **three** colleges.

Where can I get information?

- Yr11 POD
- Careers section of the school website
- From the career library in the OLA

FAQs - Post 16 providers

What are the differences between a Sixth Form and a College of Further Education?

There are differences between the two, but neither one of these options is 'better' than the other.

Sixth Forms tend to be closer to the experience that you have had at school, mainly because the most common qualification is the academic and classroom-based A-level. As well as A-levels, many Sixth Forms offer a selection of technical courses, especially larger Sixth Form Colleges. Lots of Sixth Form students study a mix of A-level and technical courses.

MYTH - Sixth Formers only progress to University. No, a significant number are applying for and taking up apprenticeship opportunities including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

Colleges of Further Education tend to offer mostly technical courses focused on specific jobs and industries. This is their strength. When a College of Further Education offers an A-level programme, it tends to be delivered within a 'Sixth Form Centre' based in the college itself. This Sixth Form Centre might have its own identity and be distinct from the larger technical body of the college. Colleges can appear to be a little more relaxed and less formal, with no dress code (unless you are wearing a uniform for a technical course such as catering or hair and beauty).

MYTH - College students only progress into work at the end of their course. Indeed, a significant number of technical learners are applying for, and taking up, Higher Education degrees, often in a subject related to their current study.

FAQs - Pathway Choice

How do I decide on what route is best for me?

- This depends on your career aspirations, your exam results and how you like to study.

If you think you might be interested in finding a job immediately after leaving school and want to get some job specific qualifications and training, then an apprenticeship could be for you.

If you have an open mind about future career possibilities, like to study academic subjects in-depth and do well in exams, then A-levels might be the perfect fit.

If you have some idea about the kind of work you want to do, prefer to do coursework and get some work experience, then a technical course could be right for you.

Remember there is also the possibility of combining A-level and technical study at many Sixth Forms.

FAQs - Qualifications - A Levels

What is an A-Level?

An A-Level is an academic course which involves in-depth study of a subject. It is focused on theories, ideas and knowledge, although some provide clear skills for work too (e.g. a Modern Foreign Language or Art and Design). Those students who progress to A-Level study tend to have succeeded at, and have enjoyed, their GCSEs.

- Assessment is almost entirely exam-based and, in some subjects, 100% of your grade is derived through the final exams at the end of the second year.

To study an A-Level do I have to have a GCSE in that subject?

In many cases, no. However, it might not be advised to choose all new subjects as you will have no prior background in them and, importantly, you might be overlooking familiar subjects you excel in. If your aspirations involve attending a 'prestigious' University it is worth noting that the 'core' subjects you have studied all of your life are sometimes needed for some degrees. There are certainly some A-Levels where you would need a good GCSE grade to be allowed to study them e.g. English, Math and Science. It is always best to check the requirements at the place you want to study at.

FAQs - Qualifications - Technical Course

What is a Technical course?

Mainly taught in Colleges of Further Education, they are related to a specific job or industry. They are taught at all levels from 'entry level' to Level 3 (for school leavers). Level 3 qualifications are 'equivalent' to A-levels and therefore they can provide progression to University or Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. Assessment is mainly coursework-based, but there are also some challenging exams throughout the programme.

If I do a Technical course, can I still go to University?

A resounding yes! Technical qualifications are well respected by universities and offer a pathway to a full-time degree course in the same way that A-levels do. In fact, some courses love students from this pathway because they have had more work experience than their A-level peers and can show the desired qualities and skills for the applied for degree. Nursing, for example, is a career related degree which looks for these kind of things in applicants. Bear in mind that there are many academic degrees (at the more academic Universities) for which academic A-level study is better preparation and therefore a requirement.

FAQs - Qualifications – T Levels

What is a T Level?

They are an alternative to A levels, apprenticeships and other 16 to 19 courses. Equivalent to 3 A levels, a T Level focuses on vocational skills and can help students into skilled employment, higher study or apprenticeships.

What can I expect?

Each T Level includes an in-depth industry placement that lasts at least 45 days. Students get valuable experience in the workplace; employers get early sight of the new talent in their industry.

T Level students spend 80% of the course in the classroom, learning the skills that employers need. The other 20% is a meaningful industry placement, where they put these skills into action. When you pass your T Level, you will get a nationally recognised certificate showing the overall grade you achieved - pass, merit, distinction or distinction*. It will also give details of what you learned on the course to help you move into skilled employment or a higher apprenticeship.

If I do a T Level, can I still go to University?

Yes of course you can! It is likely that the degree will be directly linked to your T Level, but you must have achieved a Level 3.

FAQs - Qualifications - Apprenticeship

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a program that trains a worker to become skilled in a particular trade. Apprenticeships combine hands-on work with classroom learning and are considered full-time employment. As the apprentice is learning new skills, they are applying the lessons through working and earning a wage. They complete a nationally recognised qualification and be assessed throughout their learning.

If I do an Apprenticeship, can I still go to University?

Yes of course you can! It is likely that the degree will be directly linked to your apprenticeship, but you must have achieved a Level 3. In addition, the emergence of Degree Apprenticeships provides a continued work-based pathway for apprentices to achieve higher level qualifications and experience University (albeit attending on a part-time basis). These are exciting times for apprentices.

What is a Degree Apprenticeship?

This is a new education route bringing together Higher Education and work-based training. The focus of Degree Apprenticeships is to develop the skills and knowledge for professions which previously required you to study a full-time University degree. The work-based nature of the Degree Apprenticeship means that you are paid by the employer and therefore 'earning'.

Furthermore, the employer bears the cost of the qualification. This means that those people who succeed in getting an apprenticeship of this kind will complete their 'degree' debt-free and will have been earning an often competitive salary throughout (£15,000 per year is commonplace).

FAQs - How to apply

How do I apply for a course or courses at a College of Further Education or a Sixth Form?

The quickest and easiest way to do this is go on the relevant College/Sixth Form website and complete the on-line application form. If there is not an online option, you will be able to download the application form and return by post or email. All Colleges and Sixth Forms have Open Evenings at various times throughout the year.

How do I apply for an apprenticeship?

The easiest way to do this is go on the website www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship and create an account. This will give you access to local vacancies and you can apply directly from there. You should also go to the websites of local training providers (all advertised vacancies have contact details of the training provider). There are other apprenticeship search websites including www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk, www.notgoingtouni.co.uk and www.getmyfirstjob.com

Who can help me if I still need some support with all of this?

Careers Leader – natalie.Sutton@ninstiles.org.uk

Careers Adviser – Fozia.fazil@ninstiles.org.uk

Independent Career Advisor – Debbie.perry@ninstiles.org.uk