

## What Parents need to know

Options

After

Year 11



Deciding which options to explore with your child can be confusing as they begin to progress onto the next phase of their lives. There is a wide range of options and opportunities out there for them based on their subjects of interest, career goals and preferred environment for learning. Education after 16 does not just mean staying at school full-time. Your child can stay at school, go to college or take up an apprenticeship or a part-time training course. They can earn money and learn new skills at the same time if they want to.

## Apprenticeships

So, what is an apprenticeship? Apprenticeships give you the opportunity to work for an employer, earn a real salary and gain a real qualification whilst gaining valuable workplace skills and experience. Anyone living in England, over 16 years old and not in full-time education can apply to be an apprentice. Apprenticeships are available at Intermediate, Advanced and Higher (degree) level, covering more than 170 industries and 1500 job roles.

### Levels of Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships have equivalent educational levels and the levels that you may start at depends on the employer's entry requirements and the kind of job that you are applying for. You can start an apprenticeship at the level appropriate to the job and work all the way up to achieving a master's degree for some job roles.

Intermediate ( <b>Level 2</b> ) – Generally considered to be equivalent to five GCSE passes.	Applicants need to be over 16 years old and show they have the ability to complete the program. Look at the specific entry requirements for the apprenticeship of interest as entry requirements can vary.
Advanced ( <b>Level 3</b> ) – generally considered to be equivalent to two A level passes.	Some industries want apprentices who have three or more GCSEs, but some employers do not specify any formal qualifications. Some may ask for previous industry experience.
Higher ( <b>Level 4 and above</b> ) Level 4 – equivalent to a Higher National Certificate (HNC), a foundation degree, or the first year of an undergraduate degree.	Entry requirements can include at least five GCSEs grades 9 – 5, and Level 3 qualifications, including A levels, NVQ Level 3, or a BTEC Diploma level 3. Some will require applicants to have qualifications in subjects related to the particular apprenticeship.
Degree ( <b>Levels 5 and 6</b> ) – these are new and enable apprentices to achieve a full bachelor's or master's degree as part of their apprenticeship. Masters Degree ( <b>Level 7</b> )	Entry requirements can include at least five GCSEs grades 9 – 5, and Level 3 qualifications, including A levels, NVQ/SVQ Level 3, or a BTEC National. Some employers have specific entry requirements. Many employers will expect or require applicants to have qualifications in subjects related to the particular apprenticeship.

Most school leavers will have achieved the minimum level 2 entry requirements needed to start the intermediate apprenticeship level.

### Benefits of an Apprenticeship

✓ Earning whilst learning - Apprentices receive the national minimum wage whilst undertaking the program.

✓ It is real work experience and on the job training. All apprentices should work for at least 30 hours a week, apart from in exceptional circumstances.

✓ Getting qualifications - All apprenticeships must be at least 12 months long and lead to a national qualification that is respected by employers around the world.

✓ After finishing, the majority of apprentices (85%) will stay in employment, with two-thirds (64%) staying with the same employer (BIS, May 2012).

### **How to apply?**

Applying for apprenticeships can be done by accessing the government website online [www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch](http://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch) This will enable you to search for apprenticeships that are available in jobs and your areas of interest. Apprenticeships can be difficult to find and competitive to secure, so applying to 6th Form or College is advisable as a back-up plan.

You can also speak to a Careers Adviser from the National Careers Service call 0800 100 900.

## College or Sixth Form

If my child wants to go to sixth form or college, what types of qualifications can they study?

### **A levels**

Are the traditional qualifications offered by schools and colleges for 16-19 year olds? They are highly valued by universities and focus on academic subjects, although some are work-related. The subjects selected must be carefully chosen to match the career goals and potential university courses.

Learners should note that A Levels are assessed mainly by exams. The general entry criteria for A Level courses; To study three A Levels you need: Five GCSEs at grade 9 - 4 (A\*-C), including grade 4 in GCSE English Language. Achieving a GCSE grade 6 is often asked for in subjects that you wish to follow on from GCSE i.e. to study A Level Biology, you may be asked to achieve Grade 6 in GCSE Biology at school.

### **BTEC courses**

Are vocational qualifications that are work-related qualifications suitable for a wide range of learners? They are designed to support the needs of employers and allow progression to university or the workplace. They provide a more practical, real-world approach to learning alongside a key theoretical background and are often assessed by coursework. BTEC courses are available at different levels and you will be matched to the appropriate level based on your GCSE results.

Typically, 5 GCSEs achieved 9 to 5 (\*A-C) will be required for Level 3 (which is the equivalent to 3 A levels upon completion). For a Level 2 program tutors may ask for a minimum of 3 GCSE's achieved at grade D and entry requirements for Level 1 courses may vary depending on the particular area of study. However, contact the local place of study to confirm grades required for the course of interest, as they will also be happy to advise.

## National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)

Courses are work-related, practical competency- based qualifications, assessed by building a portfolio of evidence and practical observations. These are usually completed in the workplace and are designed for you to gain the specific skills and knowledge needed to do the job. NVQ courses are available at a range of levels to prepare people for the workplace. Each route is of value, but consideration of your child's career hopes and aspirations for the future should be considered to see which will suit them best. It is also important to look at the way that the work on the course is assessed to help them learn in a way that is best suited, and this in turn can help them achieve the higher grades.

## Sixth Forms

When considering sixth forms, it is useful to look at the school sixth form prospectus for information on subjects and courses provided. Some sixth forms will mainly deliver A levels and some may deliver vocational courses including BTECs. Applications can be made directly by visiting the sixth form of interest or contacting the sixth form for an application pack.

Places can be filled quickly and checking the application deadlines is very important. Some 6th forms request that you attend an open event before applying. Application deadlines will vary; some can be as early as November.

## College

Colleges strive to provide an environment that is different to school, giving you the flexibility and freedom to make independent choices whilst having the support of tutors to advise and help throughout your studies. Colleges offer a wide range of courses in all subject areas from Vocational Courses including NVQ and BTEC options, A levels and Apprenticeships. Colleges often run taster sessions and open days for you and your child to attend to find out more information on your areas of interest and course options available. You can find out about these events online or by contacting the college of interest.

## How to apply?

When your child has attended open days or decided what course they wish to do, they can complete an online application form on the college website.

Aspiring to achieve the highest possible grades will maximise your child's opportunities to move into their preferred progression route. Maths and English are important for all pathways and can be very influential regarding the starting level that may be offered. Should Maths and/or English Language not be achieved at Grade 4 at GCSE, your child will re- study that subject as either a GCSE programme (if they achieved Grade 3) or as a Functional Skills programme alongside their main chosen course.

## More valuable information

### Financial Support

If your child is aged 16-19 and in full-time education, you can continue to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit (means testing of Child Benefit came on to effect from 2013). 16-19 Bursary Fund- Payments for students in care, leaving care, with disabilities or claiming Income Support, also discretionary payments for students facing financial hardship. The bursary may also be available to support with transport costs where applicable. Check with each institution if they offer transport as some places have their own free student buses.

### Careers Support

Your child can access Careers Information, Advice and Guidance by contacting the school Careers Lead, Mr Carl Rogers: [carl.rogers@shr.mmat.co.uk](mailto:carl.rogers@shr.mmat.co.uk) or through their form tutor. Mr Rogers' office can be found in the PE department.

The National Careers Service can offer advice by telephone: 0800 100 900 or online information available at: [www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk) More specific course advice can be obtained by attending open evening events at educational institutions that are of interest.

Attending open evenings and taster events is very highly recommended because it will provide an insight into the specific courses of study available and the provider's application process. Encourage your child to login to Shrewsbury Academy Careers Platform: [www.unifrog.org/sign-in](http://www.unifrog.org/sign-in)

Discussing some of the considerations below may help your child with this decision making process.

Key Considerations	Thoughts and feelings
What are your main subjects of interest?	
How will these subjects link to your career aims/goals and the job you would like?	
Would you prefer to learn in a school, college or real work environment?	
Do you prefer practical assessments, written coursework or exams?	
What are your predicted GCSE grades?	
Have you researched the course you are interested in?	