

2009-2010

# IT'S YOUR CHOICE

How to  
choose your  
post-16  
options

The choices

Qualifications

What to study and where

Finding work

Applications and interviews

Getting help and support

OPTIONS

2009 - 2010

NAME ▶



Also on the internet  
[www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice)

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# WELCOME TO

# IT'S YOUR CHOICE

**This magazine is full of ideas to help you choose your post-16 options:**

- » find out what you need to think about and who can help
- » see what other young people did
- » use the action points to help you organise your ideas and take control of your decision-making.

And don't panic. It is normal to feel excited and a bit scared when deciding what to do post-16. Just remember that this is your chance to take control, shape your future and get the career and life you want.



**Help your parents and carers understand what you are doing and how they can help** – give them the centre pages of this magazine and show them the full guide at [www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer](http://www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer)

**Think better online?** Try the interactive version of **It's your choice** at [www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice)

#### **Acknowledgements:**

We would like to thank all those young people who agreed to be case studies for **It's your choice**. For reasons of confidentiality some names may have been changed.

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# WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

## Case study 1



**Amanda** >

Keeping your options open

Having moved to the UK from Poland when she was in Year 9, Amanda has worked hard to learn to speak English and to study GCSEs in a language that was unfamiliar to her. Now in Year 11 and fluent in English she is targeted to achieve high grades in her exams and plans to study A Levels at college next year.

Amanda has a range of career ideas including translating and interior design and feels that it is important to keep her options open. As a result she has chosen to study A Levels in art, graphics, photography and psychology at college. She plans to go on to university after college and is keeping an open mind about what she will study.

'I decided to do A Levels to find out more about the subjects I'm interested in and to see if I want to take them further. It'll also give me the time to think more about what I want to do long term whilst getting more qualifications.'

If you do not have a firm career plan, it is sensible to choose options that will give you plenty of choice in the future. Gaining more qualifications will boost your skills and improve your future prospects and earning potential.

## Post-16 you can:

- » Continue in education
- » Do an Apprenticeship
- » Get a job – preferably with training
- » Work for yourself
- » If not ready for any of the above, continuing to develop basic skills and confidence before making a decision.

It is important to choose something that suits, interests and motivates you. What will make you happy? What do you want from life? Do our quiz to find out.

## ACTION POINT 1

### Which option is best for you?

Think about what you want to do after Year 11 then choose A, B or C.

#### After Year 11, I want to ...

A	Continue studying to gain more qualifications	
B	Go to work and gain qualifications as I learn	
C	Continue to study, but I am not sure which qualifications to do	
A	Do a full-time course at a school or college	
B	Work and study part time	
C	Think about what I could do in the future – maybe get a job	
A	Study subjects I enjoy and am good at	
B	Gain a qualification linked to the work I want to do	
C	Get some advice about courses and qualifications that would suit me	
A	Gain qualifications so I can earn more in the future	
B	Go to work and start earning money now	
C	Find out how to get some financial support to help me study or train	
A	Study for higher level qualifications as a step towards getting the job I want	
B	Start work as soon as possible	
C	Get some help to make the right decision for me	

### How did you score?

Add up your totals of As, Bs and Cs and check your results.

A B C

## Case study 2



Rowan

Entering a competitive area

Rowan is in Year 11 and about to take his GCSEs. He has done a lot of research and is keen to enter the field of computer games design. Rowan plans to continue into the school sixth form and study A Levels in Japanese, business studies, and media and film studies. He plans to move on to university in the future.

Rowan takes a keen interest in the video games industry. He looks at the trade magazines and follows the progress and development of games companies. He has also spoken to people in the industry about entry routes and has gathered information from the internet and careers publications. He is aware that the computer games industry is highly competitive, requiring high levels of skills and experience.

'I am interested in media and film because one of my hobbies is creating and cutting videos and, since visiting Japan, I am very passionate about Japanese culture. I would like to learn the language, which could help with my career progression. I am already doing a BTEC First Certificate in Business Studies, and next year I will do this at A Level.'

If you have a career idea in mind, you need to research entry routes and gain advice from the industry about what courses and experience could help you, especially if it is in a competitive area.

### Mostly As

Staying in full-time education seems to appeal to you. If so, you have many choices to research before you make a decision. Start by looking at the sections on **Qualifications (pages 5-7)**, **Qualifications and pathways (pages 8-13)** and **What to study and where (pages 14-15)**.

### Mostly Bs

Earning while you learn seems to interest you. If so, you have many choices to consider before you make a decision. Start your research with the sections on **Qualifications (pages 5-7)**, **Qualifications and pathways (pages 8-13)** and **Finding work (pages 16-17)**.

### Mostly Cs

It sounds like you are not sure what you want to do. Check out the sections on **Qualifications (pages 5-7)** and **Qualifications and pathways (pages 8-13)**. Speak to your Connexions personal adviser and people who know you well to get some help and advice. See the **Get help and support** section (**pages 24-29**) for more ideas.

Learning is vital to your future success so make the most of the **September Guarantee**. This entitles all 16 and 17 year olds to an offer of post-16 learning that meets their needs, and they also receive help to choose well.

Most young people choose to continue in education or training when they leave school and many get financial help through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (see **page 24**).

### Jobs4u

Research your career ideas using **jobs4u** at [www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u)

## ACTION POINT 2

### Organise your ideas

The option that interests me most now is:

This interests me because:

I want to find out more about:

I can get the answers I need from:

# PERSONAL CALENDAR

## ACTION POINT 3 Use this calendar to help you plan what to do as you make your post-16 choices.

### AUTUMN TERM 2009

- ▶ Read this magazine so you know what you have to do to make choices that work for you.
- ▶ Use the action points to help you make choices that suit you.
- ▶ Think about careers that interest you and find out as much about them as you can.
- ▶ Use your local online 14-19 prospectus (see **page 13**) and the resources in the Connexions Resource Centre to research your post-16 options and local opportunities.
- ▶ Collect information about options that interest you and attend open days.
- ▶ If you don't have a firm career idea, think about how you can keep your future options open.
- ▶ Find out about the common application process for post-16 courses in your area.
- ▶ Check application deadlines for options that interest you – there may be some this term.
- ▶ Ask your school about how you can find out about higher and further education – for example, class visits to university or talking to students who are at university now.
- ▶ Request information about Apprenticeships, including how to apply.
- ▶ Talk to your Connexions personal adviser about your plans and next steps.
- ▶ Discuss your ideas with your family, friends and teachers.
- ▶ Create a revision plan that works for you and stick to it.
- ▶ Be prepared to rethink your plans if your predicted grades change because of mock exams and other assessments – they could go up as well as down.
- ▶ Update or create a portfolio of evidence to help you with applications and interviews.

### SPRING TERM 2010

- ▶ Prioritise your choices.
- ▶ Apply for your chosen post-16 option, making sure you have a back-up plan.
- ▶ Prepare for interviews.
- ▶ Check that you have completed coursework and other assignments.
- ▶ Create a revision plan and stick to it.
- ▶ Find out if you can get an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) post-16 and apply for one if you can (see **page 24**).
- ▶ If you are still not sure what to do, speak to your Connexions personal adviser. Remember that all 16 and 17 year olds are guaranteed a suitable place in learning, with the information, advice and guidance to help them choose well.

### SUMMER TERM 2010

- ▶ If you still have no plans, make an appointment to see your Connexions personal adviser.
- ▶ Speak to your Connexions personal adviser if you are looking for a job with training.
- ▶ If you are not quite ready for work and don't want to stay in education, ask your Connexions personal adviser about personalised learning programmes that include preparation for work.
- ▶ Check that you have received and confirmed the offer of a place in education or training – you can still apply if you haven't done so yet.
- ▶ Think about doing some work experience or voluntary work in the summer holidays – you may even be able to get a job.
- ▶ GCSE results are out on 26 August 2010 (online on 25 August). If your results are better or worse than expected, visit your local Connexions centre as soon as possible. The school leaving date is the last Friday in June.

# QUALIFICATIONS

- » **Qualifications are your passport to more opportunities in learning and work.**
- » **Do you understand the qualifications system?**
- » **Do you know how qualifications can help you in the future? Find out here.**

## The qualifications system

Whatever you want to do in life, there is a qualification to help you do it. The important thing is to choose the right qualifications at the right time. To do this you need to know how the qualifications fit together. The September Guarantee will provide you with a suitable offer of a place in learning.

All qualifications fit into a national framework. It has nine levels. Entry level is at the bottom and level 8 is at the top. Every level includes different types of qualifications. Some are subject-based. Some are work-related. Some are job-related.

The level tells you how hard a qualification is – the higher you go, the harder the qualification.

- Most employers ask first-time job applicants for level 2 qualifications – but they increasingly want people with qualifications at level 3 and above.
- You need level 3 qualifications for most university courses – you generally need a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics too.

## How qualifications can help you in the future

There are six good reasons why you should take qualifications seriously.

1. **To give you a choice of jobs** – the number of jobs you can get without any qualifications is shrinking quickly. If you want a choice of jobs, you need good qualifications.
2. **To make sure you don't spend your life in a dead end job** – without qualifications, it is hard to move on from a low paid, low skilled job.
3. **To improve your earning power** – there is a big pay gap between people with qualifications and those without them. If you want a well-paid job, you need good qualifications.
4. **To show other people what you can do** – qualifications show employers, colleges and universities that you have the attitudes, skills and qualities they value. They tell them what you already know and can do. They also give them an idea of how well you might do in the future.
5. **To prove to other people that you can learn** – qualifications show people that you want to learn and that you can learn. Employers and higher education institutions look for people like this.
6. **To show yourself what you can do** – gaining qualifications boosts your self-confidence and self-awareness.

### Hot tip

Whatever you have achieved in school, there is a post-16 learning route to suit you.

## ACTION POINT 4

### Explore your interests

Choose one career or job that interests you. Look it up in the **jobs4u** careers database at

» [www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u) and list the subjects and qualifications you will need to do it.

Career/job:

Subjects and qualifications needed:

Now match the qualifications you need to their level, using the chart on **page 6**.

L4-8

L3

L2

L1

E

## Hot tip

You can use this framework to see how you can move up the levels and do different types of qualifications as you progress through learning and work.

# QUALIFICATION

## LEVELS

### ENTRY LEVEL

#### What:

- Basic qualifications
- Build confidence
- Help you use your learning in everyday situations.

#### Examples:

- Entry level functional skills
- Entry level personal and social development qualifications
- Entry level vocational qualifications.

#### Where they lead:

- L1 qualifications, work-based training
- Supported employment and independent living.

### LEVEL 1

#### What:

- Basic qualifications
- Build understanding of a subject, industry or area of work
- Help you use this learning in everyday situations and routine tasks.

#### Examples:

- L1 functional skills
- L1 personal and social development qualifications
- The Foundation Diploma
- L1 vocational qualifications – NVQ, BTEC Introductory Certificates, OCR Nationals
- GCSEs achieved at grades D to G.

#### Where they lead:

- L2 qualifications
- An Apprenticeship
- A job with training.

### LEVEL 2

#### What:

- Qualifications that give you good knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject, industry or area of work
- Help you use this learning in a variety of tasks.

#### Examples:

- L2 functional skills
- The Higher Diploma
- L2 vocational qualifications – NVQ, BTEC First, OCR Nationals
- GCSEs achieved at grades A\* to C.

#### Where they lead:

- L3 qualifications
- An Advanced Apprenticeship
- A job with training
- And for some – semi-skilled jobs.

### LEVEL 3

#### What:

- Qualifications that give you detailed knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject, industry or area of work
- Help you apply your learning with little support.

#### Examples:

- A/AS Levels
- The Advanced and the Progression Diplomas
- L3 vocational qualifications – NVQ, BTEC Nationals, OCR Nationals
- The International Baccalaureate
- Cambridge Pre-U.

#### Where they lead:

- Qualifications at L4 to L6
- A job with training
- And for some – technical, skilled and supervisory jobs.

### LEVELS 4-8

#### What:

- Higher level, specialist and professional qualifications
- Develop very high level knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject, industry or area of work
- Independent application of learning.

#### Examples:

- NVQs at L4 and L5
- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas
- Foundation and Honours Degrees
- Postgraduate qualifications
- Professional qualifications such as Associate, Certified or Chartered Professional.

#### Where they lead:

- A higher level, professional or specialist role in a subject, industry or area of work
- Promotion at work.

## Case study 3



Keiron

Researching the vocational route

Keiron is in Year 11 and interested in a career as a police community support officer. He has decided to continue his studies after his GCSEs and go into his school sixth form to study a BTEC National Diploma in Public Services.

'I made an early start on finding out about my career choice. I have spoken to many people, including the local police community support officer, the Connexions personal adviser and my teachers about what this job involves and how to get into it.'

Keiron has chosen a course that mixes classroom lessons with practical tasks, which will also give him useful skills and knowledge

to prepare for working for the police. The course will suit Keiron's style of learning and so motivate him to do well and gain a level 3 qualification.

'I want a job where I am not stuck behind a desk, but where I am out and about interacting with and helping people.'

For some careers there may be more than one entry route. Before making your post-16 option choices, find out about different entry routes and compare how the courses are taught and assessed so that you can choose which style of learning suits you best.

» **Do you know how to use labour market information to make sure that you have the skills and qualifications employers want? If not, read on.**

## What is labour market information?

Labour market information is data, statistics and research about the world of work and the job market. It tells you:

- where the jobs are – places, industries and occupations
- what types of job are available – full or part time, permanent, temporary or seasonal
- the skills and qualifications people need to do these jobs
- the number of people looking for work
- how the job market is likely to change in the next few years
- the skills and qualifications that people will need to get and keep a job in the future.

## How can you use labour market information?

You can use labour market information to check that you have realistic career ideas and plans. This is because it tells you:

- if the job or career that interests you is likely to exist in the future – so you can change your plans if necessary
- what employers are looking for – so you know more about the attitudes, skills and qualifications you need
- where the jobs are – so you can find work.

## What is labour market information telling us now?

The number of jobs for young people without skills has declined rapidly in recent years, and is expected to decline further. The recent 'credit crunch' has led to fewer job vacancies and higher unemployment. If you want to get a job, you need to look at the long-term trends. These show that:

- there are very few 'jobs for life' – most people change jobs several times during their working lives

## ACTION POINT 5

### Find labour market information for a job that interests you

Choose a job that interests you.

Look it up in the **jobs4u** careers database at [▶ www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u). Go to the second page of the job information and read the 'Getting in' section. What did you discover?

Go to [▶ www.scalliance.org](http://www.scalliance.org) and find the Sector Skills Council for the job that interests you. Follow the links and browse the Sector Skills Council's website. Look for labour market information. What did you discover?

Browse your local Connexions website. Look for labour market information. What did you discover?

Browse your local online 14-19 prospectus (see **page 13**). Look for labour market information. What did you discover?

Do you think the job that interests you is likely to exist in the future? Give your reasons.

Do you think that you will be able to do the job that interests you in your local area? Give your reasons.

- all industries will recruit new workers in the future – to replace people who retire or change direction
- employers want fewer unskilled, unqualified workers
- employers want more skilled, qualified workers – qualified to at least level 2 (GCSEs at grades C and above) and preferably to level 3 and above (see **page 6**)
- training is part of most jobs so employers want recruits who are willing and able to learn.

## Hot tip

Did you know that employers want people with science, technology, engineering and mathematical (STEM) skills? Whatever your interests, there is probably a STEM career that matches them – in film, finance, TV, music, gadgets, travel, health, sport, design or the environment for example. Find out more at [▶ www.futuremorph.org](http://www.futuremorph.org) and [▶ www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u](http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u)

# QUALIFICATIONS

## AND PATHWAYS

- » **Having the right skills and qualifications improves your job prospects and boosts your future earning power.**
- » **You can take different pathways to gain the skills and qualifications you need. Find out more about them here.**

### Essential skills

Some skills are so important to your future that they are part of most pathways and qualifications.

#### Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

These skills make it easier for you to organise yourself and work as part of a team. They help you to improve your learning and solve problems so that you perform better and achieve more.

#### Functional skills

These are the practical skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). You use them in everyday life, in learning and at work. Everyone needs good functional skills. That is why they are part of the secondary

### Hot tip

Check out your essential skills. Ask a friend or someone else who knows you well to help you assess your skills. Take action if you need to improve them. It is especially important to have good functional skills as you need them in all areas of work and adult life.



curriculum and the Diploma and, from September 2010, GCSEs and Apprenticeships. Schools and colleges are being encouraged to enter students for separate functional skills assessments to make sure that they have the best possible preparation for progression to further study and work.

### Personalised pathways

**Do you need a bit more time to build your confidence and gain basic qualifications? If so, this pathway may suit you.**

**What you learn:** You will get help to pick options that fit your needs and improve your chances of success in the future. Most people do a mix of:

- functional skills courses – everyone needs these practical skills to get on in life
- work-related courses – these prepare you for work by adding to the experiences and skills you can offer an employer

- personal and social development courses – these build your confidence and teamwork skills and help you to organise yourself.

**What you can do next:** You will get help to plan your future and pick options that fit your needs. You could:

- study for more qualifications – like GCSEs, the Foundation Diploma, the Higher Diploma, BTECs and other vocational qualifications
- get a job with training
- do an Apprenticeship
- prepare for supported employment and/or independent living.

**Find out more:** Speak to the people who are already helping you – your tutor, teachers, learning support staff, parents and your Connexions personal adviser.

# GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS

» Do you want to continue studying some of your GCSE subjects and look at them in more depth?

» Do you want to study more than one subject?

» General qualifications like GCSEs and A Levels are subject-related so this pathway could suit you. Find out more here.

## L1 L2 GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)

Some people take new GCSE subjects alongside or as part of other qualifications like the Diploma. Others take or retake important GCSEs like English and mathematics.

## L3 GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary (A/AS Levels: General Certificates of Education)

**Entry requirements:** These depend on the subject. Most courses ask for the equivalent of four or five GCSEs at grade C and above.

**Length:** Most courses take two years. Many people study three or four subjects in the first year then decide which to continue studying in the second year.

**Subjects:** You pick your own subjects from those offered by a school or college. Look at your online 14-19 prospectus (see **page 13**) to see what you can study locally. There are over 80 A Level subjects in total. Some called Applied A Levels have a work-related focus.

**Courses:** A Levels are split into units. You study AS (Advanced Subsidiary) units in the first year of a course. Most subjects have two AS units although some, like science and music, have three. You study A2 units in your second year. Most subjects have two A2 units but some, like science and music, have three. If you choose to study a subject for one year and pass the AS units, you will gain an AS Level qualification.

**Assessment:** Each unit is assessed separately through a mix of internal assessment and examinations.

**Where they lead:** A and AS Levels prepare you for higher education and employment. They are useful whatever you plan to do at the end of your course.

**L3 Extended Project qualification**  
This qualification helps you to develop the skills that higher education courses demand. To gain the qualification you must:

- choose a project and agree it with a teacher – you can choose a topic that lets you explore an aspect of your studies in greater depth or one that is of personal interest
- do the project and show that you can plan, deliver and present an extended piece of work at level 3.

**L3 Other options**  
Some people study the International Baccalaureate and Cambridge Pre-U post-16 instead of A Levels.

## Case study 4



Francesca

Comparing styles of learning

Francesca is in Year 13 at her school sixth form. She is completing her A Levels in product design, geography and business studies and she is keen to pursue a career in events management.

Reflecting back on her A Level choices, Francesca suggests anyone in Year 11 talks to people already doing the courses they are thinking of studying to fully understand what to expect.

'I knew I wanted to continue my studies after Year 11, but I underestimated the jump from GCSE to A Level. The workload is considerably more than I had expected and the level is much more challenging. I made sure I spoke to the right staff and previous students to make sure it was the right option for me. I often have to put in extra time if there are areas I don't understand, or if the teaching methods don't suit me.'

'A Levels can give you a lot more freedom during the school day than GCSEs as in the sixth form you get self-study periods. I've also found that they are designed to teach students independence to complete their work and attend lessons in order to get their desired grades.'

# THE DIPLOMA

» Do you want to find out more about an area of work that interests you?

» Do you want a course that combines classroom learning with practical activities and work experience?

» Do you want to keep your future options open? Then the Diploma could be the pathway for you.

**The Diploma is a new qualification that schools, colleges, employers and universities helped to develop. It is not yet available everywhere but it will be soon.**

**Level:** You can take a Diploma at three levels:

**L1 Foundation** – equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades D to G

**L2 Higher** – equivalent to 7 GCSEs at grades A\* to C

**L3 Advanced** – equivalent to 3.5 A Levels. There is also a shorter **Progression Diploma** equivalent to 2.5 A Levels. This Diploma has no optional elements.

**Entry requirements:** These depend on where you study and the level of the Diploma that interests you. Your local online 14-19 prospectus (see **page 13**) will have these details. As well as having suitable qualifications, most places require you to show an interest in the subject and a desire to do some of your learning in a practical way. You must also be willing to travel as you may need to take part of your course at another school or college in your area.

## Hot tip

For more on the Diploma check out [www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas](http://www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas)

Laura is in Year 12, and is studying the Advanced Diploma in Engineering. She was attracted to the Diploma because it combines a high level of theoretical understanding with the chance to do something that is 'hands on and creative'. Engineering is a very broad subject, and the course provides a practical taster of many areas.

It is also giving her a chance to decide what she wants to do later on. Laura's ambition is to apply to study the specialist Tonmeister Degree in Music and Sound Recording.

The practical nature of the Diploma course has suited Laura. She says: 'it is not just listening and writing down notes; it is learning as you do'. She has even enjoyed doing the assessments, which are not like normal exams. Instead, they have involved her in creating something with what she has learned. This is just the sort of thing that she hopes to do in her career in sound engineering.

Laura would recommend the Advanced Diploma in Engineering to anybody wanting to gain experience of what it is really like being an engineer. It will give you the knowledge and skills to choose your preferred branch of engineering and to make a success of it.

## Case study 5



**Laura**

**The Advanced Diploma experience**

**Subjects:** You pick a subject from those that local partnerships of schools and colleges offer. Look at your local online 14-19 prospectus to see what is available. Your choices could include:

- Business, Administration and Finance
- Construction and the Built Environment
- Creative and Media
- Engineering
- Environmental and Land-based Studies
- Hair and Beauty Studies
- Hospitality
- Information Technology (IT)
- Manufacturing and Product Design
- Public Services
- Retail Business
- Society, Health and Development
- Sport and Active Leisure
- Travel and Tourism

**Course:** The Diploma has three parts:

- learning about your Diploma subject
- the essential skills you need for everyday life, in learning and at work – including functional skills, personal, learning and thinking skills (see **page 8**), a research project and at least 10 days working with an employer. If you are working towards a level 3 Advanced Diploma, you will do the Extended Project qualification (see **page 9**)

- a choice of other subjects to help you understand more about your Diploma subject or to fulfil a personal interest – these can include GCSEs, A/AS Levels and vocational qualifications like BTEC awards (normally at the same level of your course, for example an A Level in an Advanced Diploma).

**Assessment:** Each unit is assessed separately through a mix of examinations and internal assessment, including practical tasks. You must pass all parts of the Diploma to gain the qualification. You will get a transcript showing your overall grade and your achievements in each part of the Diploma. You will also get separate certificates for each qualification you gain.

**Where it leads:** The Diploma does not qualify you to do a specific job but it does prepare you for work and further learning. Depending on the level of your Diploma you could go on to:

- a higher level Diploma in the same or a different subject
- GCSEs and A/AS Levels
- higher education – for example, to do an honours degree, a Foundation degree, a Higher National Certificate or Diploma
- an Apprenticeship
- an industry training scheme or another job with training
- a vocational course that will qualify you to do a specific job.

# APPRENTICESHIPS

» Do you know what you want to do for a living?

» Are you keen to start getting the skills and qualifications you need for your chosen occupation? If so, this could be the pathway for you.

Doing an Apprenticeship means working for an employer and learning while you earn. There is fierce competition for many Apprenticeships so you must be committed to your chosen occupation. You must also be ready to fulfil your responsibilities to both yourself and your employer.

**Level:** You can do Apprenticeships at two levels:

**L2** Apprenticeship – equivalent to 5 good GCSEs

**L3** Advanced Apprenticeship – equivalent to 2 A Levels.

**Entry requirements:** You must be 16 or over, living in England and not in full-time education. Other entry requirements vary so do your research carefully.

**Career choices:** There are over 180 Apprenticeships in 80 industry sectors. Your options will depend on your experience and what is available locally. Look at your local online 14-19 prospectus. You can also use the Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service at [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) to search for opportunities.

**Length:** Apprenticeships vary in length but generally take between one and four years.

**Training:** You will do on and off-the-job training. Off-the-job training usually takes place at a local college or specialist training organisation.

**Qualifications:** You will study for job-related vocational qualifications and functional skills qualifications (see page 8). You may also study for a technical certificate or other qualifications needed for your chosen occupation. Assessment includes a mix of observation by an assessor, the assessment of a portfolio of evidence and examinations.

**Money:** You receive the same benefits as other employees – like discounted products, pension contributions and cheap gym membership. Rates of pay vary but there is a national minimum of £95 a week. Under 19s are not entitled to the national minimum wage.

**Where they lead:** When you finish an Apprenticeship, you could go on to:

- a higher level Apprenticeship like the Higher Apprenticeship, which is a level 4 programme
- higher education
- skilled employment and further training.

**Find out more:** Speak to your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser. Call **08000 150 600** or visit [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

# VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

» Do you think you want to work in a specific industry sector?

» Do you want to find out more about a broad vocational area? Then this pathway may suit you.

**Level:** Your choice depends on where you live. Most areas offer post-16 vocational programmes at Entry level through to level 3 of the national framework (see page 6).

**Entry requirements:** These depend on where you study and the level of the programme you choose.

**Subjects:** Your options will depend on your qualifications and what is available locally. Look at your local online 14-19 prospectus. Most areas offer programmes where you can:

- Study for industry approved qualifications that you need to start work in a sector – this is normally a full programme and all the qualifications you take link to the job you want. For example, you could do a CACHE programme if you want to work in childcare.
- Study a broader work-related programme that gives you the knowledge and skills you need for higher study and getting a job. You can choose to specialise or take other qualifications alongside your main choice. For example, you could do a BTEC National Diploma in E-business which is the equivalent of three A Levels. Or you could study for a BTEC National Certificate in E-business, which is the equivalent of 2 A Levels and take an A Level or other qualification alongside it.

**Length:** Programmes vary in length but generally take between one and two years.

**Assessment:** Assessment is through a mix of observation by an assessor, the assessment of a portfolio of evidence and examinations.

**Where do they lead:** These programmes prepare you for higher level learning and work.

## Case study 6



Luke

### The Apprenticeship experience

Being a very practical learner, Luke felt that he would prefer to learn 'on the job' rather than go to college after Year 11. Having completed a Foundation Certificate in Construction in Years 10 and 11, he decided that he would like to pursue a career in plumbing and began a work placement to support this. As a result of his excellent performance in the workplace Luke's employer has offered him an Apprenticeship in plumbing.

In order to secure the training at his local college Luke had to sit an aptitude test which he successfully passed. He will begin working full time when he leaves Year 11 and will combine this with a day per week at college where he will study an NVQ Level 1 in Plumbing.

Luke is looking forward to beginning his training and to working full time and would recommend an Apprenticeship to other more practical learners:

'Doing an Apprenticeship means you get a qualification, but also get work experience at the same time. This makes it easier to get a job when the training finishes as employers can see that you have got both.'

» Is your goal to get a full-time job post-16?

» Or do you want to work for yourself? Get the facts here.

## Full-time job

If your goal is to start work full time when you are 16, look for a job with training or an Apprenticeship (see **page 11**) that leads to nationally recognised qualifications. Remember that:

- employers increasingly want skilled people with qualifications at level 3 (see **page 6**) and above
- the number of jobs for poorly qualified and unskilled people is shrinking fast
- finding a job with training will make it easier for you to get a better job in the future.

If you cannot get an Apprenticeship or a job with training, explore these options.

## Time off for Study and Training (TfST)

If you are 16 or 17 and left school without a level 2 qualification (see **page 6**), you should be able to get reasonable paid time off during normal working hours to train for an approved qualification. This must be a level 2 qualification that will improve your job prospects. To find out more, visit your local Connexions centre or visit the Connexions Direct website at

» [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

## Learn from more experienced employees

All jobs give you the chance to learn new things. Make the most of this as it adds to your experience. The more experience you have, the bigger your choice of jobs and the better your chance of finding a job with training.

## Negotiate with your employer

If you see a training course that could help you with your job, mention it at work. Employers sometimes pay for a course or help with the costs if they think that training you will also help their business.

## Hot tip

Under 18s cannot claim Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Income Support except in exceptional circumstances. Find out more. Look at the money pages in the young people's section of » [www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople)

## Working for yourself

Not many people do this at the end of Year 11. If this is your goal, you need a great business idea, strong enterprise skills, some expert advice and the ability to work extremely hard.

Boost your enterprise skills by signing up for enterprise activities in school or college. Watch out for Young Enterprise projects and look at the student information on

» [www.youngbizuk.co.uk](http://www.youngbizuk.co.uk)

Get some expert help. Even big businesses use expert help so do not try to go it alone!

- Speak to the people at your local Education Business Partnership – ask your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser for their contact details
- Explore » [www.shell-livewire.org](http://www.shell-livewire.org) for advice on how to start a business
- Look at the 'Starting up' section of » [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk) or call the helpline on **0845 600 9 006** to find your regional Business Link
- Check out The Prince's Trust on **0800 842 842** or » [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk) – look at the 'Need help' section.

## Case study 7



**Nayim**

### The enterprise experience

Nayim is in Year 11 and about to take his GCSEs. He would like to enter a career in business or as a travel agent.

Because of his interest in the business world, Nayim has taken part in young enterprise days at school. These days involve various activities to introduce you to the world of work and encourage you to problem-solve and work with others on a task. Such activities help develop communication, negotiation and team working skills, which are all valued by employers.

'One enterprise day in Year 11 reminded me of the television programme *The Apprentice* and it motivated me to want to succeed in life. The activities are a welcome change from the normal school routine and have helped build my self-confidence. I have learnt to work with others towards a common goal and the experience has also helped me manage my school work.'

Nayim enjoyed his enterprise activities and would recommend doing them. He is looking forward to next year and plans to continue with his education and do A Levels in business studies, ICT, PE, and travel and tourism.

## Hot tip

Think better online? Then use the interactive version of **It's your choice** at » [www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice)

## ACTION POINT 6

### So, which pathway interests you?

a) Tick the option that interests you most.

- personalised programme
- general qualifications – GCSEs, A and AS Levels, the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge Pre-U
- the Diploma – Foundation, Higher, Advanced, Progression
- an Apprenticeship
- a vocational programme
- a job with training

b) Use your local online 14-19 prospectus to explore the options that interest you and to see who can help you get where you want to be.

Name and website address of the prospectus

Where I can do the options that interest me

How they will help me in the future

Who can help me get where I want to be

I can't find what I want so I need to speak to the careers co-ordinator...

or my Connexions personal adviser... as soon as possible.

Can't find your prospectus? Ask your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser for the details. Alternatively, go to [www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus](http://www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus), type in your postcode and follow the link.

### Case study 8



**Harry**

#### Deciding between college and sixth form

Harry is a very able student who is targeted A\* grades in his GCSEs. He has no set career ideas at present although knows that he wants to go to university in the future, and has decided to study a range of A Level subjects.

When making his post-16 choices, Harry had to decide between going to his local college or to one of the sixth forms in the area. In order to choose, he visited them, talked to staff and students, researched the subjects available and explored previous results tables. He then met with his Connexions personal adviser and discussed the pros and cons of each.

Harry decided that sixth form would suit him better than college due to the smaller environment, the support available and the structure of teaching. His advice to anyone in his situation is:

'Go and visit as many places as possible so that you can compare them. Think about how you learn and where would suit you best. Don't just go where everyone else is going. It's important to choose the right place for you.'

# WHAT TO STUDY AND WHERE

## Case study 9



**Maria**

Benefiting from support

Maria has retinal dystrophy which causes severe visual impairment. She also has cerebral palsy which affects her movements and co-ordination.

Despite her difficulties Maria is studying a range of GCSEs at a mainstream school and also goes to college once a week to do a Level 1 Certificate in Land-Based Studies (Equine). She is keen on a career working with horses and would like to have her own stables and be a riding instructor in the future.

In order to achieve her ambitions, Maria plans to do equine studies at college post-16. Because she has very specific physical needs, Maria decided to look at local provision but also consider specialist colleges that cater for people with visual impairments. She visited a number of places to find out which would suit her best.

During her visits Maria spent time talking to tutors and other students to find out more about the colleges. She also discussed her plans with her Connexions personal adviser, parents and other family members who know her well. She has decided to go to a specialist college where she will study a key skills and lifeskills programme, combined with an equine course at a local college.

'Visit colleges to see for yourself what they are like. Ask other people who support you for advice, but in the end do what's best for you in your situation.'

» Interested in continuing in learning? Check out our advice on how to choose the right learning programmes and qualifications.

## Work out your priorities

Where you learn is as important to your success as what you learn. Make it easier to choose by deciding what is most important to you and what you are willing to compromise on.

## ACTION POINT 7

### Continuing in learning – work out your priorities

Tick the things that are essential to you. Then see which of your options provides the closest match.

- Being with my friends
- Being with people my own age
- Knowing some of the teachers and students before I start
- Being at a place with a good reputation
- A friendly atmosphere
- Being close to home
- Good social facilities
- Good sports facilities
- Being able to continue studying the subjects I enjoy
- Being able to study something new
- Being able to take a mix of different qualifications
- Learning in one place
- Spending part of my time in the workplace
- Doing a course at a specialist college – these offer courses in specialist areas like music and horticulture as well as courses for students with specific, additional needs or disabilities

## Do your research

This is the only way you can find out what you need to know. Use our research tips to help you get the information you need.

## ACTION POINT 8

### Research tips

- Read the rest of this magazine to get an overview of what you can do – or use the interactive version at [www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice)
- Use your online 14-19 prospectus and school and college brochures to find out about local opportunities and how to apply.
- Find out about the common application process for post-16 opportunities.
- Look up opportunities that interest you in the Connexions Resource Centre or careers library.
- Go to open days, taster activities and other events.
- Read the information you collect. Pay attention to what different courses and programmes involve and where they lead. Look for information about entry requirements, course or programme length, teaching and learning styles, assessment and any extras you may have to pay for.
- Talk to people who are doing the course or programme now – look at the student pages and message boards on an organisation's website and use your social networking service.
- Get expert help from your careers co-ordinator and Connexions personal adviser.

## Make your choices

Remember to think about the following questions when choosing courses.

### Will I enjoy this course?

You will increase your chances of success if you choose courses that you think you will enjoy. Before you decide what to do, discuss the courses that interest you with your family, friends, form tutor, subject teachers, careers co-ordinator and/or Connexions personal adviser.

### Will the learning styles suit me?

How do you learn best? Seeing and reading? Listening and talking? Touching and doing? You will find it easier to succeed if you choose courses that allow you to use your preferred learning styles.

### Will the assessment methods help me to succeed?

Choose courses with a mix of assessment methods that suit you. For example, you cannot avoid written examinations altogether, but some courses have more coursework and portfolio assessment than others.

### How will this course help me in the future?

If you have a firm career plan, check that you are taking the subjects you need to reach your career goals. If you are still undecided about what you want to do, choose a variety of subjects that will give you plenty of choice in the future.

### Hot tip

Don't ruin your chances of success by missing an application deadline. You can apply to more than one place if you need more time to decide what is best for you. Doing this also makes sure that you have a back-up plan in case things do not go the way you expect.



### Hot tip

Having a disability should not stop you from learning. If you think you may need extra help with your post-16 learning, mention it at open days and in applications and interviews. Find out more at [www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople) and [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

# FINDING WORK

» Interested in getting a full or part-time job? Check out our advice on how to improve your chances of success.

## Put some effort into your job search

Finding a job is a job in itself. If you need some practical help, speak to your Connexions personal adviser. You should also:

- use your personal networks – family, friends, neighbours etc.
- look in local shop windows
- look at the vacancies noticeboard in school or college
- read the job pages in local newspapers and magazines
- visit the websites of companies that you would like to work for to see if they have any vacancies
- use job search websites
- make copies of your CV (see **page 22**) to give to local businesses when you are asking about jobs
- write to companies that you would like to work for asking if they have any opportunities available (see **page 22**).

## Think about what makes you employable

Make sure that when you find something to apply for you can:

- state clearly what it is that you can offer an employer
- provide evidence to prove what you say.

If you need some help with this, look at **Work in a changing world (page 19)** and **Applications and interviews (pages 22-23)**.

## Work out your priorities

It is easier to spot job opportunities that fit you if you know what you are looking for. Remember though that life is not perfect and you may have to compromise.

## Hot tip

Learning pays! On average, a young person with five or more good GCSEs or equivalent earns over £100,000 more during their working life than someone who leaves learning with qualifications below level 2.



## ACTION POINT 9

### Finding work – identify your priorities

Tick the things that are important to you

- full-time job
- part-time job
- holiday job
- knowing the place
- knowing some of the people who work there
- close to home
- the chance to learn new things
- doing different tasks
- having some responsibility
- working hours that suit me
- being paid above the national minimum wage
- other

## Do your research

Find out as much as you can about what a company does, what an employer wants and what the job involves. Then work out how your interests, abilities, experiences and achievements match them. Remember that:

- even if you are 16, you cannot start a full-time job until after the last Friday in June in Year 11 – this is the official school leaving date and you cannot work full time before then
- different jobs pay different rates but, unless you are an Apprentice aged 19 or under (see **page 11**), you are entitled to the national minimum wage for your age group – find out more at [www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw)
- job adverts quote gross pay – this is what you get before deductions. Your take home pay may be less as your employer may deduct National Insurance, income tax and voluntary contributions such as pension payments
- the law stops you from doing some jobs – for example, you cannot work in a bar during opening time unless the work you do is part of an approved training scheme. Under 18s cannot do some jobs for health and safety reasons. Speak to your Connexions personal adviser to find out more.

Get more tips and information from the:

'Work and careers' section of [www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople)

'Work' section of [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

'Work and study' section of [www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)

## Hot tip

If you have trouble finding a full-time job, remember the **September Guarantee**. This entitles you to an offer of post-16 learning that meets your needs and you will also receive information, advice and guidance to help you choose well.

## ACTION POINT 10

### Next steps

What help do I need to find the right opportunity for me?


Do I have any useful contacts? Who?

How can they help me?

What shall I do next?

### Case study 10



**Jessica**   
Benefiting from  
work-related learning

Jessica is in Year 11 and is in the second year of a work-related learning programme where she spends two days a week on a placement at an animal sanctuary and three days in school working towards a range of GCSEs. As well as spending time in her placement Jessica also goes to a learning provider where she has gained other qualifications such as first aid, health and safety and food hygiene.

Whilst on the placement, Jessica has learnt how to look after and care for a range of animals. She loves looking after the horses and ponies and quickly became a volunteer working at the sanctuary at weekends. Jessica has done so well in her placement and as a volunteer that the sanctuary has now offered her a weekend job and she is working there on a Saturday.

Over the two years on the work-related learning programme, Jessica has grown in confidence and is determined that she wants a career working with animals. She has been accepted on a Level 2 BTEC First Diploma in Horse Care at a local college, which includes a work placement.

'Don't be afraid to give something new a go. The work-related learning programme has given me the chance to meet new people and try new things. I now know what I want to do in the future and I'm getting the experience and learning new skills to get me there.'

# EXPERIENCE NEEDED

## Case study 11



Tom

Influenced by work experience

Tom is in Year 12 and doing a BTEC National in Music Technology and Music Practice. He loves playing drums in his band and for a long time his dream was to work in a recording studio or as a roadie. But he has learnt that recording is highly technical and he is now rethinking his career plans.

In Year 10, Tom did some work experience in a primary school. He enjoyed the variety of activities and helping the children to explore ideas and express themselves. He has started working as a tutor with junior bands at a youth group. He helps them practise every week and organises gigs.

'I am an outgoing, sociable person and now I want to find out if I would be good at working with children in a nursery school, as there are Apprenticeships available, such as in Children's Care, Learning and Development.'

'I am going on a taster week which includes two days' work experience in a nursery school so I can test out my plans. I have talked to my Connexions personal adviser and looked at information on youth work.'

'I think my music skills could be used to encourage children to get involved and have fun. Working with children could be just what I am looking for!'

- » How can you get the experience you need to meet the entry requirements for a specific opportunity?
- » How can you test your career ideas and employability skills while boosting your self-confidence and learning new things? Find out here.

### Do some work experience

This is a great way to find out more about working life and to test your career ideas and employability skills. You may do work experience as part of a post-16 course. If not, speak to a careers or personal adviser and find out how to negotiate your own work placement. Make the most of any work experience that you do. Think about how it has improved your skills and changed your career ideas and attitudes to learning and work.

### Be a volunteer

There is no pay but volunteering gives you the chance to help your community, experience different workplaces and learn new skills. It also builds your confidence and self-esteem. Make the most of any volunteering that you do. Think about your achievements and the skills you have gained. How have they affected your attitude to life, learning and work? Check out these websites if you want to see what you could do.

- » [www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)
- » [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)
- » [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)
- » [www.dofe.org](http://www.dofe.org)
- » [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk)
- » [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

### Get a part-time or holiday job

This is a great way to earn money and find out about working life. It also adds to your knowledge and skills and builds your confidence. Make the most of it. Think about what your performance tells other people about your employability and your ability to learn. If this option interests you, look at **Finding work (pages 16-17)** and **Applications and interviews (pages 22-23)**.



### Hot tip

Make the most of your experiences. Keep a record of what you have done and what it tells other people about you. If you do not have a personal portfolio in which to store these records, set one up now.

# WORK IN A CHANGING WORLD

» Will you be able to hold down a job in the future? If you are not sure, read on.

The world of work changes very quickly so employers want people who are flexible, who can learn and who can cope with change. They also want people with general employability skills who will not lose sight of business basics like customer care. Are you employable? Use our checklist to help you find out.

## Hot tip

Sharpen your modern foreign language skills! Global markets mean that more firms than ever before want people with modern foreign language conversational skills. They also want more employees to spend some of their time working abroad.

## Hot tip

Memory is fragile. Start building a portfolio to remind you about your experiences and achievements. Use it to store certificates and other evidence. Look at it when you are writing a CV and making applications.

## ACTION POINT 11

Are you employable?

Do you have:

- good practical skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)?
- a positive attitude to work?
- the ability to organise and motivate yourself?

Can you:

- work as part of a team?
- solve problems?
- follow instructions and accept criticism?

Do you understand:

- why customer care is important?
- what makes a business successful?

Are you ready to:

- be flexible in your working arrangements?
- work with different types of contract – like part-time, full-time, fixed term and permanent ones?
- keep learning so that you can do several different job tasks, work in different parts of a company and move from one company to another?
- spend part of your working life abroad?

What could you offer an employer now? (You can use this information in your CV)

How could you improve your employability in the next couple of years?

# HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

» **Going into higher education (HE) sets you up for a greater choice of jobs and a good chance of better pay. It could be one of the most valuable things you ever do.**

» **Not sure what HE is or what it involves? Find out here.**

## Fact file

**Courses:** HE doesn't just mean studying for an honours degree. There are several other qualifications available. Whatever your interest, there is probably an HE course to suit you. You have over 50,000 to choose from and each has a different mix of theory and practical learning. In some courses you

study one or two subjects in detail. In others you gain work-related knowledge, understanding and skills. Course length varies from two to five years. Sandwich courses include a placement year in a workplace or a year spent studying abroad.

**Study:** You can study full or part time at:

- a university or other higher education institution (HEI) that is close to home or some distance away
- a further education college – many offer a variety of HE courses
- home through flexible and distance learning – you study on your own using multi-media resources, attending workshops or residential sessions as required.

**Qualifications:** Most people work towards qualifications at levels 4 to 6 in the national framework (see **page 6**).

Many take honours degrees such as a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc). Many also take work-related qualifications such as a Higher National Certificate and Diploma (HNC/HND) and a Foundation degree (Fd).

**Entry requirements:** The exact qualifications, grades and experience required depend on the course you choose. Most HEIs accept a wide range of level 3 qualifications (see **page 6**) including A and AS Levels, BTECs and the Advanced Diploma. You can also enter HE from an Apprenticeship and from full or part-time work. Check the entry requirements of the courses that interest you very carefully, as you may need to study particular subjects for specific courses, and contact the HEI if you have any queries.

**Costs:** Costs depend on the course and HEI you choose. Some places are much cheaper to study in than others. You will have to pay tuition fees and for things like study materials, food, accommodation (if you decide to study away from home), transport, clothes and leisure activities. But there is government help available with these costs – see below.

**Financial help:** Full-time HE students can get financial help from the government. Some can also get extra help from their HEI. Different arrangements apply to part-time students. Find out more at

» [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

## Financial help for full-time students

**Government support includes:**

- An annual Maintenance Grant to help with accommodation and living costs. The amount you get depends on your personal circumstances and you do not have to repay it.
- An annual Student Loan for Tuition Fees. Paid directly to your HEI, this covers the full cost of your tuition fees. You have to repay the loan when you finish your course and are earning over £15,000 a year.
- An annual Student Loan for Maintenance to help with accommodation and living costs. It is paid into your bank account. The amount you get depends on your personal circumstances and the size of your Maintenance Grant. You have to repay the loan when you finish your course and are earning over £15,000 a year.
- You may be able to get extra help if you are a parent or have a disability or learning difficulty.

To find out more go to » [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

**Help from your HEI**

If you are getting a full Maintenance Grant from the government, your HEI will offer a minimum bursary payment. Some HEIs also offer scholarships. You do not have to repay bursaries and scholarships.

## Hot tip

A recent CBI survey said that a third of current jobs require degree-level skills or qualifications and this number will continue to grow.



**Student life:** You have to organise a lot of your own learning as tutors and lecturers guide you rather than tell you what to do. HEI staff and information on the intranet help you get used to this. You meet many new people of different ages and from different places and backgrounds. All HEIs have student clubs and societies. Most have social and sports facilities too. You will also have access to student discounts.

### What you can do with an HE

**qualification:** Having an HE qualification gives you many options. For example, you could:

- move up to a higher level of learning
- apply for jobs that interest you
- apply for a management or industry training scheme
- set up your own business.

**Find out more:** Browse these websites

- [www.direct.gov.uk/uni](http://www.direct.gov.uk/uni)
- [www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk)
- [www.uniaid.org.uk](http://www.uniaid.org.uk)

Find out if your school or college offers HE modules as part of the curriculum or organises other activities that give you a taste of what HE is like.

### Gap year

Some people take a year out (a gap year) before starting HE, but it could be at any time. They spend it studying, working or travelling. If this interests you, visit your local Connexions centre or check out

- [www.yearoutgroup.org](http://www.yearoutgroup.org) or
- [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

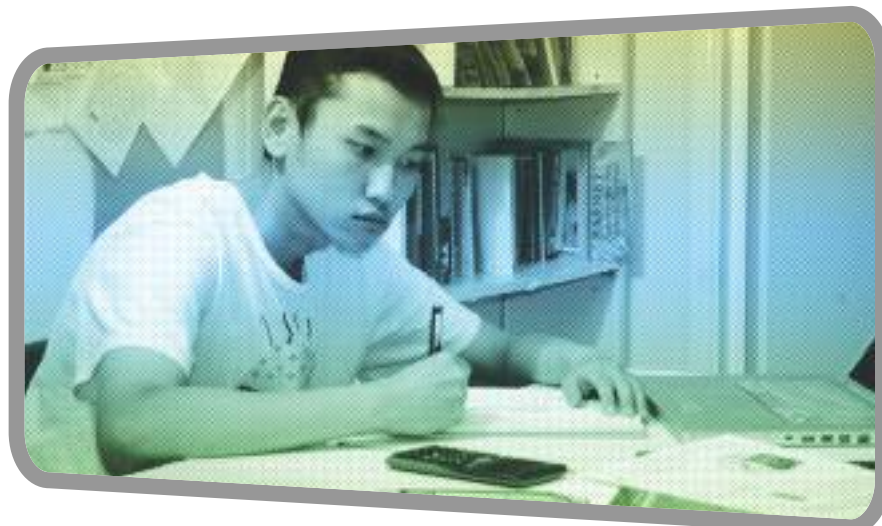
## ACTION POINT 12

### Is higher education (HE) for you?

HE interests me because:

HE does not interest me because:

I think I will:



# APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

» Do you want to create the right impression? Use our tips to help you.

## CVs

Most recruiters take less than 30 seconds to look at each CV they get. Will yours hold their attention? A CV is your personal publicity leaflet. It is short – no longer than two sides of A4. It tells the reader who you are and what you know, understand and can do. Every word counts. If you want to make a good impression you must put time and effort into writing it. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

### What do you put in a CV?

There are no rules but most people include:

- personal details – name, address, telephone number and a sensible email address
- a personal profile – two or three sentences highlighting your best points. For example, 'A hard-working, responsible person who ...'
- key skills and achievements – a bullet point list of skills and achievements showing what you can do and how you work
- qualifications and training – showing titles, actual or predicted grades/results, and when and where taken
- employment and work experience – employer names with dates and a brief description of work duties and responsibilities
- interests and hobbies – the top two or three plus anything like a Duke of Edinburgh Award
- referees – contact details for two referees (not relatives) who can say what you are like, including your attitude to work.

### Application letters

These are formal letters. Will yours show recruiters you are taking your application seriously and care about the impression you make? If sending a letter by post, use

good quality paper and envelopes. Word process it unless specifically asked for a handwritten one. Use a standard layout and keep it to one side of A4.

### What do you put in a letter?

Start by giving your reasons for writing. Usually you will either be:

- applying for an advertised job vacancy or other opportunity – make sure you include the reference number and description given in the advert
- asking if someone can offer you a job or another opportunity such as a work placement.

Follow this with one or two paragraphs that tell readers why you are a good candidate for the job or opportunity. Do not repeat what is in your CV. Give new or extra details

### Hot tip

Don't use the heading Curriculum Vitae on your CV. It wastes space and recruiters know what they are looking at.



about the skills, qualities and achievements that you think fit particularly well with what you are applying for.

End assertively. For example, 'I look forward to hearing from you', 'I am available for interview ...' or 'I would be grateful if you could keep my name on file in case any opportunities arise in the future'.

### Application forms

Application forms ask people for the same information. This makes it easier for recruiters and admissions officers to compare candidates and identify those who fit their requirements. Make sure that you pay attention to detail so that you make the right impression. Fill the form in carefully. Do not leave any sections blank unless told to do so.

### You should:

- Read and follow all the instructions carefully. For example: writing clearly, using capital letters and black ink; using the specified font and font size in a form and the specified subject line in a covering email.
- Use a copy of the form (or a notepad) to draft your answers.
- Check your answers for accuracy and to ensure you have given enough detail.
- Ask someone you trust to check your draft.
- Keep a copy of your completed form so that you don't forget what you said.

## Interviews

These are your chance to find out more about an opportunity and for the opportunity provider to find out more about you. Follow these steps to increase your chances of success.

### Before you go for the interview:

- Prepare well. Research the organisation as well as the opportunity. Look at the website and read all the information you receive.
- Plan what to take to the interview – do you need a portfolio of work or a pen?
- Plan how you will get to the interview so that you will arrive in plenty of time.
- Check if the interview includes any tests or assessments. If it does, speak to your Connexions personal adviser to get some ideas on how to tackle them.
- Think about what questions they might ask you and how you could reply. Share your ideas with your friends, family and other people who know you well.
- Make a list of questions to ask them.
- Plan what to wear. If it is a job interview, make a special effort to look smart.
- Don't take risks. Always tell somebody where you are going. Do not agree to meet anyone who suggests holding the interview in their car or somewhere unexpected like a café.

### Just before the interview:

- Turn off your mobile phone.
- Dispose of any chewing gum properly.
- Check your appearance.

### In the interview:

- Sit up straight and make eye contact with the interviewer or interview panel.
- Smile and be polite. It is important to make a good impression on everyone you meet.
- Listen carefully to the questions and think before you speak – ask for more detail if you are unsure what they are asking.
- Always tell the truth.

Use the interactive version of **It's your choice** at [www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice) to practise doing a CV and application letter.

Get more information about applications and interviews at [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com) and in the **Work and Training** section of your Connexions Resource Centre or careers library.



# MONEY MATTERS

## Case study 12



Laura

EMA changed my life

Laura is in Year 13 in her school sixth form, and is preparing to take her A Levels. She plans to pursue a career working with children.

For the last two years Laura has received an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of £30 a week. This has made a real difference as she has been able to concentrate on her studies without having to worry about money.

'I have been able to buy all the necessary equipment such as books and stationery to allow me to achieve my full potential.'

Laura is now planning to do a degree in childcare at university. She has spoken to her Connexions personal adviser and university staff about what financial support she can access.

'I have looked into financial support for higher education, maintenance grants and bursaries – without these I would not be able to continue my studies. There is a lot of support I can get which will allow me to go to university. The support is really helpful as it allows lower income families to encourage their children to continue in full-time education.'

It is important not to let financial concerns discourage you from staying in education. Money may be available to you, so speak to an adviser.

» **Have you thought about how you will manage for money post-16? If not, start here.**

### Help with post-16 learning costs

Learning is vital to your success in work and adult life, so you can often get help with your learning costs.

#### Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

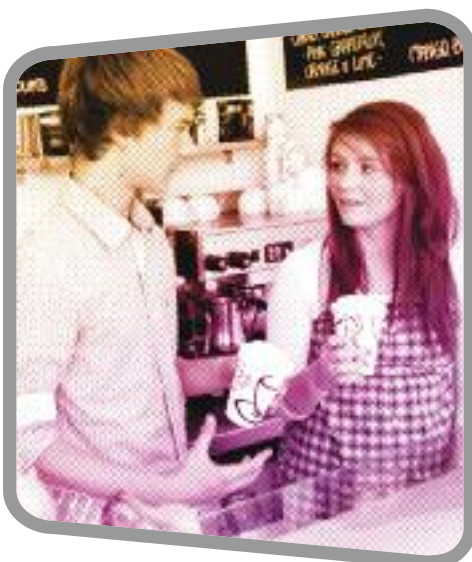
You could get a weekly payment of £10, £20 or £30 a week to help with day-to-day expenses. The money goes straight into your bank account. The amount you get depends on your personal circumstances and does not affect any benefits that your parents/carers receive. In return you must meet attendance, learning, behaviour and other goals set out in your learning agreement with your school, college or training provider. If you do well you may get a bonus. Find out more at

» [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema)

#### Care to Learn

If you are a parent, this could help you with your childcare and travel costs. You do not have to do a course that leads to a formal qualification, but you must be under 20 on the day you start your course. Find out more at

» [www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn](http://www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn)



#### Scholarships and study awards

You may be able to get one of these if you want to do a specialist qualification in areas like dance, drama and sports. They are in short supply so there is fierce competition for them. They help towards living costs and tuition fees that government funding does not cover. To find out more, speak to your subject teachers, coaches, Connexions personal adviser and college student services. If your interest is in dance and drama awards look at

» [www.direct.gov.uk/danceanddrama](http://www.direct.gov.uk/danceanddrama)

#### Discretionary Support Funds

Schools and colleges have extra funds to help post-16 students who are in real financial need. Speak to the Student Support Officer to find out more.

### Help with post-16 living costs

If you are in full-time education and training, your parents/carers will normally receive child and other benefits until you are 19. Under 18s do not usually get any benefits except in exceptional circumstances – if you have caring responsibilities or cannot live at home for example. You may also get extra support if you have additional needs.

If you have money worries:

- speak to your Connexions personal adviser
- visit the Connexions Direct website at » [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)
- contact DIAL UK, the network of disability advice lines, at » [www.dialuk.info](http://www.dialuk.info) or on 01302 310 123.

### Hot tip

EMA is paid straight into your bank account. If you haven't got a bank account, open one now!

# MY CHOICE



## Money and work

Things you need to know if you get a full or part-time job post-16.

**Bank account:** Very few employers pay cash so you will probably need a bank account. Choose carefully and ask your friends and family for help if you need it.

**National Insurance Number (NIN):** Keep this safe. You need it when you start work and if you have to claim benefits later on.

**National Minimum Wage:** Unless you are an Apprentice aged 19 or under (see **page 11**), you should be paid the National Minimum Wage from the age of 16 onwards. It does not matter what job you do or the size of the firm you work for. The government reviews the rates every year. Any increases take place in October. Find out the current rates at  
➤ [www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/nmw)

**Payslips:** Employers should give you a payslip each time they pay you. It will tell

you your gross pay, your take home pay and any deductions made for National Insurance, Income Tax, pension and other contributions. Keep them safe as you may need to refer to them in the future.

**National Insurance Contributions (NIC):** Most people pay these. They go towards your state pension and help to pay for other benefits like Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

**Income tax:** Most people pay income tax through a scheme known as PAYE (Pay As You Earn). The more you earn, the more you pay. When you start work, HM Revenue and Customs will send you a tax code and a PAYE reference number. They also send them to your employer. Keep them safe. Employers use your tax code to calculate how much tax you should pay.

**P60:** Your employer will give you this tax form every April. It summarises your pay and tax payments for the year. Keep it safe. You can use it to prove your income, to apply for

tax credits and to claim back any tax you have overpaid. If you lose it, your employer can give you a replacement.

**P45:** Employers will give you this tax form when you stop working for them. Do not lose it. You cannot get a replacement and you need it when you start a new job or apply for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Without your P45, a new employer cannot calculate how much tax you should pay and will put you on an emergency tax code. This is usually higher than your actual tax code. You will get a refund if you pay too much under the emergency code but it will take time to sort out.

**Find out more:** Browse the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section of  
➤ [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) and look at the 'Money' and 'Work' sections on  
➤ [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)  
See also  
➤ [www.direct.gov.uk/moneytolearn](http://www.direct.gov.uk/moneytolearn)



## ACTION POINT 13

What money matters do you need to know more about?

	Interested in (tick all that apply)	Where to find out more
Care to Learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Discretionary Support Funds	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Extra help because of my exceptional circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial support for higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Help to meet my specific needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Income tax	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Managing my money	<input type="checkbox"/>	
National Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	
National Minimum Wage	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Opening a bank account	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Scholarships and study awards	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Understanding payslips	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### Hot tip

Start your search with the 'Money' and 'Work' sections on [▶ www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com) and the 'Money' pages in the 'Young people' section of [▶ www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

# PEOPLE, PLACES

# AND WEBSITES

» **Choosing what to do post-16 is not something you should leave to chance. Everyone needs a bit of help with decision-making.**

» **Read on to find out how you can get the help and support you need.**

## People

### Talk to the people who know you really well

People like your family, friends, tutor and subject teachers want the best for you. They will listen to and discuss your ideas with you. Better still, they will tell you why they think an option will suit you or not.

### Talk to the people who know what you need to know

The person running an option and the people doing it can give you a good picture of what it is really like. Ask them about things like learning activities, workload, assessment and costs.

### Get an expert opinion

Speak to your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser if you cannot make up your mind or want a second opinion from someone who will not take sides. Careers co-ordinators know a lot about what each option involves and how it might help you in the future. They can also tell you where to get more information and help.

Connexions personal advisers have special training to help you tackle personal and career issues. Sometimes you can drop in to see one at break or lunchtime, so watch out for information about when they are in school. Otherwise you will have to ask your form tutor or careers co-ordinator to make an appointment for you.

## Places

Visit your Connexions Resource Centre or careers library

Look in the following sections:



Choices



Education



Work and Training



Money



Where to Get Help

### Pop into your local Connexions Centre

Here you can talk to a personal adviser, use computerised career guidance programs, look at job vacancies, do internet research and get help to apply for financial support. Ask your careers co-ordinator or Connexions personal adviser for the address. Alternatively look it up in the local phone book or visit

» [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

### Sign up for open days, visits and course tasters

The best way to find out about an option is to see it in action!



## Case study 13



**Dominic**

Seek information and impartial advice

Dominic is in Year 12 and taking A Levels in mathematics, further mathematics, chemistry, physics and English literature. He is undecided about a future career goal.

When choosing his post-16 options he sought advice from as many people as possible, including his Connexions personal adviser, on how to keep a range of careers open.

'There are many career options in the modern world, so it can be difficult to decide which route to take. After my GCSEs I chose to stay on at school and go into the sixth form to gain more qualifications. I want to ensure I have as many options open to me as possible in the future, so I have chosen a wide range of A Levels. I found the Connexions personal adviser really helpful in researching my path ahead. I also found the internet useful, as well as talking to my friends and family.'

If you are undecided about what career or course choices to make, then it is useful to ask for help and seek advice from a range of people. Gaining more qualifications is a good way to keep your options open and broaden your choices.

Looking ahead, Dominic thinks he will go on to university and possibly pursue a degree in engineering.

## Websites

If you do not have a computer at home, you can access the internet at school, in your local Connexions Centre and at your local public library.

### Use Connexions Direct

This is a service for 13-19 year olds. It offers quick access to information and advice on things that affect teenagers. The website is at [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com). The helpline is open seven days a week, from 8am to 2am. You can talk to a Connexions Direct adviser who has special training to help with personal and career issues. You can talk to them online, on the phone **080 800 13 2 19** and via email, text **07766 4 13 2 19** and textphone.

### Explore your local online 14-19 prospectus

Get information about the local labour market, local opportunities, how to apply for them and the support you can get with learning costs and transport. Find out where to get information, advice and guidance to help you choose well.

You can find your prospectus by visiting [www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus](http://www.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus), putting in your postcode and following the links.

### Browse the young people's pages at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Directgov is the government's one-stop shop for information about public services and has links to other useful sites. You can search the site using age group, topics and keywords.

### Check the information you find before you use it

Getting information is step one. Step two is to check it before you use it. This is especially important if you use a search engine or a social networking service to find information. Ask yourself these questions to make sure that the information you have is trustworthy, unbiased, accurate and up to date.

**Source:** Who paid for it to be published and why? Do you trust this source?

**Purpose:** Does it give you the facts? Is it trying to persuade you to agree with a particular point of view? Do you think it gives you an unbiased picture?

**Writer:** Who wrote it? Do you believe the author knows enough to give you accurate information?

**Date:** When was it written, published or updated? Is it still up to date?

**Relevance:** Does it answer your questions?

## ACTION POINT 14

### Who will help you?

List the people in and out of school who you think could help you to make the right choices for you.

How could these people help you?

# ACTION PLAN

Use this plan to help you finalise your post-16 choices.

You can copy the form or use the interactive version at [www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice)

**Where I am now:** (eg thinking about my choices/gathering information/planning college visits/  
speaking to employers/making applications/preparing for interviews/sorting out finances etc.)

**What do I need to do and when:** (eg look at my local online 14-19 prospectus/fill in the common  
application form/speak to my Connexions personal adviser/apply for jobs/update my CV etc.)

Action	By what date	Completed (Y/N)?

## CHECKLIST

### I have now

- Researched my options and found out where they can lead
- Been to open evenings, taster activities and careers events
- Spoken to my teachers, Connexions personal adviser, friends and family
- Made my decision
- Applied for my first choice
- Made a back-up plan

**You now have all the tools and information you need.**  
**Think carefully about your decisions and do what is right for you.**  
**Good luck. It's over to you ...**

Further copies of this booklet are available from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) at:

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**Tel: 0845 602 2260**  
**Fax: 0845 603 3360**  
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You will be able to use your PC to enlarge the text.

## PARENTS & CARERS

A pdf and text only version of the insert is available online at  
▶ **[www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer](http://www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer)** where you can also find an expanded, online version. You will be able to use your PC to enlarge the text.

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▶ **[www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer](http://www.connexions-direct.com/parentcarer)**

## FEEDBACK

This publication has been produced on behalf of the DCSF by VT Careers Management.

We welcome feedback on **It's your choice**. If you have any thoughts on the content of this booklet, or how it's presented, please contact VT Careers Management at email:  
**[vtcm.publications@vtplc.com](mailto:vtcm.publications@vtplc.com)**