

FOUR PATHWAYS TO YOUR FUTURE

- The government is simplifying qualifications so that young people choose between **Academic, Technical, Vocational** and **Work-Based routes**.
- By **2028**, **A Levels, T Levels, V-Levels, Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs)**, and **Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)** will be the main Level 3 options.
- Many older **BTEC** and **Vocational Technical Qualifications (VTQ) courses** will be replaced or restructured to align with these new pathways. V-Levels will also become a new Vocational pathway with the first subjects available from Sept 2026
- Schools and colleges will help learners identify the most suitable route based on strengths, career goals, and learning style.

ACADEMIC PATHWAY

(A Levels & Alternative Academic Qualifications)

TECHNICAL PATHWAY

(T Levels, TOQs & Occupational Diplomas)

VOCATIONAL PATHWAY

(VTQs & BTECs – during the transition)

WORK-BASED PATHWAY

(Apprenticeships & Supported Internships)

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

3 x A Levels

T-Levels

VTQs still available in some areas

Apprenticeships (Intermediate to Advanced)

2 x A Levels + 1 small AAQ

Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs)

BTECs and Cambridge Technicals (until phased out)

Supported Internships (for learners with SEND)

1 x large AAQ

Occupational Entry Diplomas

V-Levels (first subjects to be launched Sept 2026)

Work Experience or Industry Placements as part of a Study Programme

LEVEL

Level 3

Level 2 to Level 3

Level 1 to Level 3

Entry Level to Level 3

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Usually **5 x GCSEs at grade 4–9**, including **English and maths**. Some subjects need higher grades in specific areas.

Usually **4–5 GCSEs at grade 4–9**, including **English and maths**.

Level 1–2 courses: open to learners with fewer **GCSEs grades 1–4**
Level 3 courses: usually **4–5 GCSEs at grade 4–9**

Vary by employer; typically **GCSE English and maths (grade 4+)** for **Level 3+**.

IDEAL IF YOU...

Enjoy academic learning, exams, and independent study.

Want to combine classroom learning with industry experience and develop specialist technical skills.

Prefer practical, hands-on projects and continuous assessment.

Ready to earn while you learn and gain real work experience.

LEADS TO...

University, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, and professional careers.

Skilled employment, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, or technical degrees.

Further study, Apprenticeships, or direct employment in skilled trades, health, business, and creative industries.

Employment, Higher or Degree Apprenticeships.

KEY MESSAGE

The traditional route for learners aiming for higher education.

The new specialist route for learners focused on technical careers.

A practical skills-based route being streamlined as new technical qualifications replace some courses.

Learn on the job, develop skills, and get paid while you train.

Speak to a Careers Adviser to help you explore the options in more detail.