

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS AT 16?

- A-Levels
- Apprenticeship
- Vocational

A-Levels

A-Levels are the traditional qualifications offered by schools and colleges. They're highly valued by universities and employers and focus on academic subjects, although some are work-related.

All A-Level exams take place at the end of Year 13. Each college and sixth form have differing GCSE requirements for entry – see each prospectus for the specific details. As a general rule, most establishments will require 5 GCSEs A*-C (Grade 4 and above, to include maths and English) however some will request a higher level of attainment.

Apprenticeships

These are a work-based learning programme which enable the apprentice to earn a wage and gain on-the-job experience whilst learning new skills leading to nationally recognised qualifications. Apprenticeships have no set duration as the time taken will depend on the ability of the apprentice and the employer's requirements. The minimum pay is £3.50 per hour, but many earn more.

Most (if not all) of the apprentice's time will be in employment as most training takes place on the job. However, off-the-job training can be completed on day release or over a number of days in a block; the amount of time is dependent on the type of apprenticeship (and the provider). There are now higher level apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships. You can research apprenticeships in your local area by visiting www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

Vocational Qualifications

Vocational courses offer students a more practical programme, equipping students with skills that relate directly to job roles or industry. Emphasis is put on coursework rather than examination, although you will take a small number of exams under the new system. There are different types of vocational courses offered by a number of different awarding bodies.

Each college and sixth form has its own entry requirements for each course and these will be set out in their prospectus. However, I have put together a general guide for the requirements of each level.

LEVEL	EXAMPLE OF QUALIFICATIONS	EXAMPLE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
Entry	Introductory Course/Basic Skills Course	No formal qualifications Entry by interview
Level 1 - Foundation	BTEC Introductory Diploma City and Guilds NVQ Level 1	No formal qualifications Entry by interview
Level 2 - Intermediate	BTEC First Diploma NVQ Level 2 GCSE Apprenticeship	Grades D-G or 1-3 or above (English Language and maths grade 1-3 or above)
Level 3 - Advanced	BTEC National Diploma BTEC Extended Diploma NVQ Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship	4 or 5 GCSEs at grade C or above (Grade 4 or above) English and maths must be grade 4 or above
Level 4	Higher National Diploma Higher National Certificate NVQ Level 4 Foundation Degree Professional Courses Higher Apprenticeship	A-Levels Level 3 NVQ or Diploma

Frequently Asked Questions by Year 11 Students

Q: Can I apply to more than one college or sixth form?

A: Yes – it's advisable to apply to at least three places, so you have a back-up plan if you don't get the grades you need for your first choice.

Q: Should I check up on dates and times of open evenings/days before going to any of them?

A: Yes – look at the organisation's websites - dates and times sometimes change.

Q: How do I apply?

A: You can get some application forms from Mr Flynn or directly from the training provider. Most organisations also accept on line applications, although it is best to have this checked by someone who can look out for SPaG errors before you submit the application. Application forms can be posted directly or handed to Mr Flynn who will arrange for them to be collected.

Q: Do I need a Progress File?

A: Not always. Some of our local providers might ask if you have one and the Grammar Schools will definitely want to see evidence of your achievement. Mr Flynn has some files you can use should you not have your own. You should have a completed CV and a Personal Statement in your file. Send a copy of your Personal Statement with your application, it really helps the organisation learn more about you and strengthens your application, particularly for those courses which are popular and over-subscribed.

Q: When should I apply?

A: As soon as possible – early applicants get the most choice. Attending open events and speaking to staff from schools/colleges will help you make up your mind.

Q: Are there any other colleges/sixth forms?

A: Yes – this booklet lists the main ones our students have accessed in the past. The area-wide prospectus aims to inform you of every college and every course on offer in Lancashire. You can find it at www.ucasprogress.co.uk

