

POST 16 OPTIONS INCLUDING QUALIFICATIONS EXPLAINED AND THEIR ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Sixth Form / College – Full Time Course Options

Full Time Level 3 Course Information

For entry to the two year, level 3 courses, such as:

- A levels
 - The International Baccalaureate Diploma
 - T level courses
 - BTEC level 3 courses
- See below normal entry requirements

Entry Requirements

A levels – normally **at least** 5 GCSEs are required at grades 9-5 including English and maths. However many places require higher grades for A level study e.g. grade 6s and above. To study some specific A level subjects such as Maths, English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Languages (and sometimes other subjects) a grade 6 or above is often required in the relevant GCSE subject. Many Grammar Schools require high grades usually 6/7s+.

IB – normally require GCSE grades 9-6 or higher

BTEC at level 3 and T levels - normally **at least** four or five GCSEs are required at 9-5/4 grades including English Language and Maths.

NOTE

If GCSE Maths and/or English Language are not passed at least at a grade 4 the student will probably not be able to move onto a level 3 course and these two subjects should be retaken.

Entry requirements will vary greatly between schools and colleges so check these carefully with individual institutions. Look at their websites.

A Short Description of Level 3 Courses

A levels

A level students normally study three or sometimes four subjects over 2 years. There are many subjects to choose from i.e. Maths, Drama, Media studies, Psychology, Law and many more.

A level courses are normally assessed by exams at the end of the 2 year course, however a few subjects are assessed by both exams and some coursework. The subjects usually involve a lot of theoretical learning and much less practical activities.

International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB Diploma)

The IB Diploma is for those expecting high GCSE grades, it is also 2 years in length. Six subjects are studied usually one chosen from each of these six groups, Maths, English, Science, Humanities/Social Sciences, Foreign Language and Arts/Practical. Three are chosen as higher subjects and three as standard subjects. Also students will need to complete an Extended Essay, study a course called the Theory of Knowledge and take part in Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) events and activities within the community. An IB student would need to be highly academic and a good 'all-rounder'. Points are awarded for the diploma with 45 being the highest points possible to achieve and 24 points being a pass.

BTEC & other vocational courses

The 2 year BTEC level 3 courses, are vocationally-based. This means the course learning is related to employment areas such as Childcare, Business, ICT, Sports Science, Performing Arts and so on. BTEC courses involve theory and practical activities and can be assessed by coursework and exams. Results = Pass to Distinction*. BTECs at level 3 are equivalent to A levels.

Students can study one (or sometimes more) BTEC level 3 qualifications, but always check equivalence information for example: The BTEC Extended or Technical Diploma level 3 is equivalent to 3 A levels.

The BTEC Diploma level 3 is equivalent to 2 A levels.
The BTEC Foundation Diploma level 3 is equivalent to 1.5 A levels.
The BTEC Subsidiary Diploma level 3 is equivalent to 1 A level.
The BTEC Extended Certificate level 3 is equivalent to 1 A level.
The BTEC Certificate level 3 is equivalent to 0.5 A levels.

It is sometimes possible to study a mixture of A levels and BTECs.
Generally make sure that what is chosen adds up to the equivalent of at least 3 A levels.

T Levels (Technical Levels).

These are relatively new level 3 courses. They are 2 year vocational / work related qualifications in career areas such as Legal, Finance, Science, Management and Administration, Health, Design, Surveying & Planning and many more. They are equivalent to 3 A levels. They will be college based 80% in the classroom and 20% at a work placement (45 days in total). A mixture of theory and practical learning will take place. There will be exams and coursework. Results = Pass – Distinction*. The plan is that these will gradually take over from all other vocational courses.

Important Notes

*Students need to understand the different demands of the IB, A level, BTEC level 3 and T level courses and which style of learning will suit them best. For example, are they good at exams or do they prefer coursework and assignments? Do they enjoy theory or practical learning?

*When choosing which subjects to study in sixth form or college, it is **very important** to check if particular subjects are required for entry to particular university courses or higher/degree apprenticeships in which the student has an interest. This will help to ensure that they are not later excluded from applying for particular degree courses/apprenticeships. For example, Biology and Chemistry are extremely sensible choices for entry to Medicine and the best A levels to choose for Computer Science are Maths and Computer Science.

*A few universities may not accept BTEC level 3 (equivalent to 3 A levels) or T level qualifications for degree entry. Others will accept BTEC level 3 (equivalent to 3 A levels) as long as an additional A level subject has also been studied. However most will accept a BTEC level 3

(equivalent to 3 A levels) on its own, just like they accept A levels or the IB Diploma. Please do check entry requirements for Degree courses if you have a course in mind using www.ucas.com or individual university websites.

*All level 3 courses will gain you UCAS tariff points for entry to higher education courses.

*All level 3 courses can lead to university or employment or to a higher/degree apprenticeship or to a school leaver programme.

Full Time - Level 1 and 2 Course Information E.G. BTECs

Achieving mainly grade 3s in GCSEs can lead to a BTEC level 2 diploma, 1 year course. The level 2 diploma courses are marked at Pass, Merit or Distinction. Please note that a merit or above is normally required for progression to the level 3 BTEC or a T level. These are available in career areas such as Business, Engineering, and Sport. The alternative which is offered by very few colleges is a GCSE Retake Year this means you can retake 4 or 5 GCSE subjects, usually to include Maths and/or English Language if necessary, grade 3 in GCSE subjects will be needed.

For entry to 1 year level 1 courses, normally GCSE passes 3-1 are required or sometimes entry can be through a college test and/or interview. A pass at level 1 can lead to entry to level 2 the following year.

Full Time - Entry Level Course Information

Some colleges offer Entry Level Courses these are for students who need some preparation and additional support before starting a level 1 course.

An Alternative Option

Full Time Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a mixture of on the job work experience (80% of the time) and planned education/training (20% of the time) leading to a Vocational Qualification or a Technical Qualification. Education/training for a qualification usually takes place one day per week at a college or training centre with the remainder of the time spent in the workplace although this can vary and, for some apprenticeships such as retail, all of the training and education can sometimes totally take place in the workplace.

All apprentices will be employed and receive a wage.

Apprenticeships are offered at foundation level, level 2 intermediate, level 3 advanced, level 4/5 higher and level 6 degree apprenticeships. Entry requirements and lengths of the apprenticeships will vary so students will need to check these. Employers may look at academic qualifications, may ask the student to sit an assessment test and the student will be interviewed. They may also ask for a reference from the school.

If considering applying for an apprenticeship as your main Post 16 choice you need to apply using www.apprenticeships.gov.uk and through other means which the Careers Adviser can explain to you. However as it is difficult to get apprenticeships it would also be advisable for you to apply for a sixth form/college place also, just as a back-up.

You cannot combine an Apprenticeship with full time Education.

If you do **not** find a place in full time education or an apprenticeship

You would need to seek voluntary work and part time study for a while until you do find something more permanent.

You need to remember:

That your enthusiasm and attitude and your attendance, punctuality and behaviour records will be taken into account when colleges, sixth forms and employers are considering you for places and opportunities. Most will ask your current school for a reference (Discuss with your Tutor or Head of Year).

Mrs Vicki Banbrook – Careers Adviser
Aug 2025