



# CHOICES AT 16

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

Once you get to 16, you've got some decisions to make about your future.

Do you want to stay on in full-time education?

Or would you prefer to start work and get training while you earn?

## It pays to keep learning

After Year 11, you have a lot more choice about what you want to do. Whichever route you choose, it pays to keep learning. More and more, employers are looking for people with higher level skills and qualifications. Although qualifications cannot guarantee you a job, people with the right skills and qualifications have a better chance of finding a job with good prospects and more money. They may also have more job security.

## Which route should you follow?

There are lots of different ways of gaining further qualifications, skills or work experience - and the range of options is growing.

### YOU COULD:

- continue in full-time education, either at school or college
- continue your learning through work-based training

If you're aged 16 or 17 and coming towards the end of a school or college course, the 'September Guarantee' means that you'll definitely be able to continue learning. Everyone in this age group due to leave education is guaranteed an offer of a place on an appropriate course - and information, advice and guidance to help weigh up their options.

## Staying in full-time education

You'll find a much wider range of subjects and qualifications than you've been able to choose from up until now.

As well as A levels, you can choose from a growing range of work-related qualifications. Selected schools and colleges are also offering the new Diploma qualification for 14 to 19-year-olds.

Depending on what you want to study, you could decide to stay on at school, or go to a sixth form college, specialist college or further education college.

## Learning at work

If you want to start work, it's important to pick a job that offers you planned training leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

There are lots of ways to improve your skills and get qualifications, from Apprenticeships to the 'Entry to Employment' scheme. As an alternative, you may be entitled to 'Time off for Study or Training'.



## Getting work experience

When you've finished your studies, you could consider taking time out before going on to higher education. Voluntary work, travel and working abroad can all be ways of gaining valuable experience.

## Routes into university and higher education

By continuing with full-time learning or starting an Apprenticeship, you can take important steps towards qualifying for a higher education course.

## Options after 16: getting into university and higher education

If you want to get into higher education, there are lots of options available. It's not necessarily about getting A levels – you can study full time for work-related qualifications or go for an Apprenticeship. You may also be able to take an Advanced Diploma qualification.

## What could higher education do for you?

Higher education can open up new career options, and research shows that people with higher education qualifications typically earn more money than those without. They may also have more job security.



## More than just degrees

Higher education isn't necessarily about getting a traditional degree. You could choose to do a Foundation Degree, combining academic study with workplace learning. Another option is a work-related qualification, like a Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma. Whatever your

interests, the chances are you'll find a course you'll enjoy – the choice of subjects is much wider than at school.

## Routes into higher education: what are your options?

Universities and colleges set their own entry requirements, so they vary from course to course. When you're choosing what to do at 16, it's important to find out what qualifications and grades you're likely to need for the type of higher education course you want to do.

For full-time courses, you can look up entry requirements on the UCAS website. For part-time courses, get the university or college prospectus – most are now available online.

Depending on the course you want to do, there are two main routes that could potentially get you into higher education:

- staying in full-time education
- learning while you work

## Staying in full - time education

If you decide to stay in full-time education after Year 11, there are a range of academic, work-related and skills-based qualifications you can potentially use to get into higher education.



Generally, you'll need qualifications at level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework. For UK students, this usually means:

- A Levels
- Scottish Highers
- An Advanced Diploma
- NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications)
- SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications)
- BTEC National Diplomas and Certificates
- GCEs in applied subjects

You can also count Key Skills qualifications towards your application (Key Skills are the essential skills that employers need their workers to have).

Students from outside the UK can apply for courses with qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate, European Baccalaureate and Irish Leaving Certificate.

## Learning while you work

If you want to start work after Year 11, an Apprenticeship can be a route into higher education.

You'll usually need to take an Advanced Apprenticeship. This leads to an NVQ at level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework. As an Apprentice, you will also study for Key Skills, a technical certificate or other qualification relevant to your job. These can also count towards entry into higher education.

## Work experience

For some courses - for example, many Foundation Degrees - the institution you apply to will look at your work experience as well as your qualifications.

## Help with study costs

If you decide to go for higher education, there's financial help available. For full-time courses, you can apply for Student Loans to cover your fees and living costs. You won't have to start paying these back until you have left your course and are earning over £15,000 per year. You may also qualify for a non-repayable Maintenance Grant.

There may be extra, non-repayable help available if you have a disability, or if you have children or adult dependants. You may be able to get additional help through a bursary from your university or college.



## Finance for full-time students starting in 2009/2010

Student finance is changing. Student Finance England makes it easier than ever to apply online for Student Loans, grants, bursaries and some forms of extra help. Apply now for academic year 2009/2010.

## Finance for new students starting in 2009/2010

If you're starting a full-time higher education course in 2009/2010, the main types of financial help you may be able to get are:

- a Maintenance Grant or Special Support Grant - worth up to £2,906
- a Student Loan for Tuition Fees to cover your fees in full (up to £3,225)
- a Student Loan for Maintenance - worth up to £4,950 if you live away from home, or more if you study in London (though the maximum you can get is reduced if you're getting help through the Maintenance Grant) a bursary from your university or college

## How do you apply for student finance?

The fastest and easiest way is to apply online. Student Finance England provides the service for online applications in 2009/2010.

If you apply online for the parts of the finance package that depend on household income, your parent or partner can support your application by supplying their financial information online. If you prefer to apply on paper, use form PN1.

## Financial help for disabled students

If you have an impairment, health condition (including a mental health condition) or specific learning difficulty like dyslexia, you may be entitled to claim extra financial help as a student. This is paid on top of anything you get through the standard student finance package.

Financial help for disabled students Sources of extra financial help for disabled students include:

- Disabled Students' Allowances
- Access to Learning Fund
- Disability Living Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance
- These are paid on top of the standard student finance package.

## Disabled Students' Allowances

Disabled Students' Allowances are grants to help with the extra costs a student may face as the direct result of an impairment, health condition or specific learning difficulty.

The amount you can get isn't affected by your household income, and the allowances do not have to be repaid.

## Access to Learning Fund

If you're in financial difficulty, you may be able to claim additional financial help through the Access to Learning Fund.

## What can the Access to Learning Fund help with?

The Access to Learning Fund can provide extra help if you're in hardship and need extra financial support. Your university or college will look at your individual circumstances, but you may, for example, be able to get help:

for course or living costs that are not already covered by other forms of financial help - these could be everyday living costs, childcare costs or support over the summer vacation if you have no one else to turn to for emergency payments to cover unexpected financial crises or exceptional costs - such as repairs to essential household equipment if you are thinking of giving up your course because of financial problems and need extra support to help you keep studying.

## Find out more

You can make a start by looking at the directories, prospectuses and careers software in your school Connexions Resource Centre or local Connexions Partnership.

If you're aged 13 to 19, you can also contact a Connexions Direct adviser for free, confidential advice – by phone, email, webchat or text message.

## Connexions Direct helpline: 080 800 13 2 19

Get the Aimhigher guide to higher education. There's lots more information in 'Your future, your choice' - the Aimhigher guide for young people aged 16 plus.

*by freephone on 0800 587 8500  
by textphone on 0800 280 024*

Quote reference '16PLUS09'. Copies are available in Braille, large print or audio cassette.

