



Very soon year 11 students will need to start making some important decisions about the next step in their education. There are many choices available to them and they should carefully consider what their next step should be. It could be staying on in the Sixth Form, making the move to college or starting an apprenticeship.

One of the most common questions year 11 students ask is, 'what are the differences between A-levels and a BTEC qualification?' UCAS have some excellent information on the differences between the two.



A levels

A-Levels are subject-based qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. You can normally study three or more A levels over two years. They're usually assessed by a series of examinations.

What grades do I need to take A levels?

You normally need

- at least a grade 6 in the specific subject(s) you want to study
- a 4/5 in Maths and English

However, the specific requirements needed to study A levels will vary across schools and colleges. It's important to check what you will need with the school or college you are looking to study at.

Who are they for?

If you're thinking about going to university, most higher education courses require specific A levels or combinations of A levels (or alternative level 3 qualifications). If you're not sure what career or job you want to do, studying a selection of A levels can be a good way of keeping your options open.



Choosing A level subjects

The most important criteria for choosing A levels subjects are:

1. Looking at what you are likely to enjoy and be good at. If you enjoy a subject or have an ability in it already, you are more likely to do well.
2. If you have a particular career, job, or further study in mind, you may need to choose specific A levels in order to meet entry requirements.
3. How open you want to keep your future study and career choices?

A-Levels	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to study different topics, giving you the choice of career to pursue • Suited towards people who do well under pressure and in exams • Some specific Uni courses require A-Levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work can be overwhelming • You could lose interest in one or more subjects, meaning you'll either have to drop it or begrudgingly carry on • Most likely to be assessed through exams

Which? University

Have an excellent tool to explore what different combinations of A levels can lead to.



Use the A-level Explorer to see what degree subjects will be open to you, based on your combination of A-level subjects (or the ones you're thinking of taking). Simply pop in your A-level subjects and see what you could study at university. It will also give you a list of popular careers based on the subjects you have chosen to study.

While many degrees will be open to you whatever subjects you choose, some courses will require or prefer you to have specific subjects in your A-level line-up.

<https://university.which.co.uk/a-level-explorer>

BTEC

BTEC stands for the Business and Technology Education Council. BTECs are specialist work-related qualifications.



They combine practical learning with subject and theory content. There are over 2,000 BTEC qualifications across 16 sectors – they are available from entry level through to professional qualifications at level 7 (equivalent to postgraduate study).



BTECs are designed for young people interested in a particular sector or industry but who are not yet sure what job they'd like to do.

BTEC	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated course focussing on one subject in depth• Graded through coursework, portfolio and presentation, which is similar to Uni• Focus on employability and practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you lose interest in your course you will have to start all over again with something else• You can only apply to Uni courses in a relevant field• You will have a constant flow of assignments and coursework

You could study a BTEC or CTEC at Level 2 or 3, either alongside academic qualifications or as part of a wider programme (such as an apprenticeship). You can also study a BTEC as a standalone course.

There are over 2,000 BTEC and CTEC qualifications across 16 sectors, including:

- applied science
- art and design
- business
- childcare
- construction
- engineering
- media
- health and social care
- hospitality
- ICT
- land-based
- performing arts
- public services
- sport
- travel and tourism

Different types of BTEC and CTECs

BTECs and CTECs are broken down into three main levels of study:

1. **BTEC Firsts and Cambridge Nationals** are available from entry level to Level 2 (similar standard to GCSEs). These offer an introduction to work in a vocational sector. Combined with other qualifications, these can enable you to go on to further study, to an apprenticeship, or into employment.
2. **BTEC Nationals or Cambridge Technical** are available from Level 3 (similar standard to A levels). Many of these are well regarded by universities, further education colleges, and employers. A BTEC National qualification can lead to employment, continuing study, or professional development programmes.
3. **BTEC Apprenticeships** are available at Levels 2 to 5 across more than 25 sectors.

How do they work?

BTEC and CTEC qualifications are flexible – you can take one alongside A levels in schools and colleges. They're

also usually studied full-time, either in college or jointly between a school and a college.

BTECs or CTECs are divided into units, which cover specific areas of knowledge, skills, and understanding required by the particular sector or industry.

1. Every BTEC or CTEC student takes the core units, which provide a broad foundation and understanding about the sector.
2. There is a range of optional units to choose from which enable students to focus on particular interests and plans they have for next steps into further study, an apprenticeship, or employment.
3. The course involves a series of assignments which can be written or activity-based, for example creating a film clip, planning and putting on a performance, or creating a business plan. Students complete some assignments individually and some as part of a team. For some BTEC or CTEC courses, students can also apply their knowledge and skills through work experience.

What are the entry requirements for a BTEC or CTEC?

Entry requirements vary depending on the school or college and the particular BTEC or CTEC course you are interested in. You may need up to five GCSEs at grade 4 to 9 for a level 3 diploma.

What can you do next?



BTEC Nationals and Cambridge Technicals

On successful completion of a BTEC National qualification, students can progress to employment or continue their learning in the same or related areas of study, in higher education and professional development programmes.

Some BTEC National qualifications are recognised as technical certificates and form part of the apprenticeship framework. They can attract UCAS points but if you are thinking of going to university or on to higher education, it is important to check whether the universities offering the courses you want to apply to accept BTEC Nationals.

BTEC Firsts and Cambridge Nationals

These enable you to go on to further study at Level 3 (for example BTEC Nationals), to do an apprenticeship, or to go into employment.

<https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/btec-diplomas>



APPRENTICESHIPS which one works for you?

Another option that year 11 students can consider is an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships are perfect for ambitious people of any age who are looking to gain skills, progress within a career and earn a wage at the same time.

When you first start out in your career you usually need a mix of qualifications and experience. An apprenticeship gives you both in one neat little package! With some apprenticeships you can even get a degree.

It takes between one and four years to complete an apprenticeship depending on which level you take. You can also pick from a range of industries because lots of high quality prestigious companies offer apprenticeships.

The minimum wage for apprentices is set by the Government and increases annually, so make sure you do your research to find out the latest rate. However, many employers pay more than this!



It is important that you go to Sixth Form and College Open days to help you make the best decision for your future.

Haileybury Turnford Sixth Form Thursday 22nd November, 5-7pm

Hertford Regional College

Broxbourne and Ware Campus

Wednesday 10th October, 5:30-8.30pm

Capel Manor College

Saturday 13th October, 10-3pm

Harlow College

Tuesday 16th October, 5:30-7:30pm

Stansted Airport College

Tuesday 6th November 5:30-8:30pm



There are a range of apprenticeships advertised weekly via the Harlow College and Hertford Regional College websites.

<http://www.harlow-college.ac.uk/study-options/apprenticeships/apprenticeship-vacancies>

<https://www.hrc.ac.uk/apprenticeships/apprenticeship-vacancies>

Here is a selection of the positions on offer. For further details on each apprenticeship please visit the website.

IT Helpdesk Engineer Apprentice

Tranquil IT are seeking an apprentice IOT Helpdesk Engineer to join their growing support team at their Bishops Stortford Base. Full training given.

Location: Bishop's Stortford Closing Date: 14/10/2018

Employer Name: Tranquil IT Solutions (South) Ltd

Wage: £148.00

Ref: 1454902

Ref: 1458178

Hospital Work Experience – Last Minute Places for October Half Term

The Project London residential course has places left for both w/c Sunday 21st October and w/c Sunday 28th October for work experience to prepare you for applying to medical school. For more information please visit

<https://www.medicalprojects.co.uk/project-london/>

To search for nationwide apprenticeships visit:

<http://www.getingofar.gov.uk/>

If you have any questions or queries relating to careers please contact the careers leader Kate Ward on wardk@haileyburyturnford.com