

QUALIFICATIONS EXPLAINED

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Level 3 Courses

For entry to the two year in length, level 3 courses, such as A levels, the IB Diploma, the T level courses and the BTEC level 3 courses normally **at least** four/five GCSEs are required at 9-5/4 grades including English language and maths.

For the IB Diploma and A levels entry is often much higher. For some A level subjects or IB subjects such as maths, English, biology, chemistry, physics and languages a grade or above are often required.

If GCSE maths and/or English language are not passed at least at a grade 5/4 the pupil will probably not be able to move onto a level 3 course next year and these two subjects should be retaken.

Entry requirements will vary greatly between schools and colleges so check carefully what these are with individual institutions.

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.

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 theory 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. 3 are chosen as higher subjects and 3 as standard subjects. Also students will need to complete an extended essay, study a subject called the theory of knowledge and take part in creativity, activity, service (CAS) events and activities. You 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 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 they choose to study add up to the equivalent of at least 3 A levels.

T Levels (Technical Levels, some will be available by Sept 2020).

These are new level 3 courses. They are 2 year vocational / work related qualifications in career areas such as Accounting, law and finance, Business and administration, Hair and beauty and many more. They are equivalent to A levels. They will be college based 80% in the classroom and 20% at a work placement. 45 days will be with an employer. A mixture of theory and practical learning will take place. 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 they have 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 usually essential for entry to medicine and the best A level to choose for computer science is maths.

*A few universities do not accept BTEC level 3 qualifications for entry. Others will accept BTEC level 3 as long as an additional A level subject has also been studied. However most will accept A levels or the IB Diploma or BTEC level 3 or T level 3 qualifications.

*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.

Level 1 and 2 Courses

Students who achieve GCSEs at grades 3 or below can do a one year, level 1 OR level 2 course (the level depends on the exact grades achieved) such as a BTEC level 1 or BTEC level 2 or a GCSE Retake Year level 2.

Achieving mainly grade 3s 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. These are available in career areas such as business, engineering, sport. The alternative which is only offered by a few colleges is a GCSE Retake Year this means you can retake 4 or 5 GCSE subjects.

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.

Entry Level Courses

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

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 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or a similar vocational/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 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.

Traineeships

For students who are not quite ready to start an apprenticeship, it is possible to do shorter courses e.g. traineeships to help them to prepare for entry to employment or training/apprenticeships. These courses can help to:

- improve confidence and motivation
- develop basic functional and key skills, particularly maths and English
- provide the opportunity to gain some work experience
- provide preparation and support for job and training applications (such as writing CV's, interview techniques and job search).

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