

Comparing post-16 qualification and study programme options September 2025-2027*

	A levels (Level 3)	T Levels (Level 3)	Apprenticeship (Level 2/3)	Alternative Academic Qualifications (from 1 August 2025) (Level 3)	Reformed Technical Qualifications (from 1 August 2025) (Level 2/3)	Applied General Qualifications** (Level 2/3)	T Level Foundation Year (Level 2)
Where would you study for these?	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	Work for an employer and part-time study.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.
Main focus	Academic study to support progression to higher education.	Employer-designed to prepare for skilled employment or further study.	Job-specific training in the workplace with part-time study.	Blend of academic and applied learning for HE entry. Designed to be taken alongside A levels in a mixed study programme.	Prepare for occupational roles.	Applied learning for HE or work; often taken with A levels.	Study programme providing a high-quality route onto T Levels for students who would benefit from additional time before a T Level.
Assessment type	Primarily examination but some subjects include non-examined assessment (NEA)	Core (typically 2 2hr written exams and externally set project in controlled conditions) and the Occupational Specialism (externally set project style assessment).	End point assessment.	40% exams. Non-examined assessment set by AO.	Proportion of external assessment and method not mandated. Must meet additional criteria set by IfATE: e.g. must meet employer needs.	Minimum 40% external assessment.	Flexible and holistic assessment.
Length of study	Usually 2 years full-time study.	2 Years full-time study.	Usually 1-2 years.	Usually 2 years full-time study.	This depends on the qualification size and part-time/ full-time study.	Usually 1-2 years full-time study.	Usually 1 year of full-time study.
Study/ training focused	Classroom-based.	80% classroom-based, some with workshops, labs and specialist settings, 20% industry placement.	Work-based, while studying for a qualification.	Classroom-based.	Classroom-based, some with workshops, labs and other specialist settings.	Classroom-based.	Classroom-based.
What could they lead to?	Progression to Higher Education (Undergraduate degree/ HTQ), employment or an apprenticeship.	Progression to skilled employment, higher education (Undergraduate degree/ HTQ), or a higher-level apprenticeship.	Progression to skilled employment, higher education (Undergraduate degree/ HTQ), or a higher-level apprenticeship	Primarily progression to Higher Education (Undergraduate degree/ HTQ), but also employment or an apprenticeship.	Primarily progression to skilled employment, but can also lead to Further/Higher Education (Undergraduate degree/ HTQ), or a higher-level apprenticeship	Progression to employment, Higher Education (Undergraduate degree/ HTQ), or a higher-level apprenticeship	Progression to a T Level (or other level 3 technical qualification) or level 2 apprenticeship.