



Department
for Education

Post-16 Pathways progression maps

For qualifications being delivered from 2027

September 2026



Purpose of the progression maps



In the Post-16 Pathways Implementation Plan published in May 2026, DfE committed to publishing example progression pathways for V Levels to give providers and students clarity on V Levels progression routes.

The aim of the progression pathways is to provide accurate and easy-to-understand information for providers and students with no previous knowledge on V Levels to understand where they can lead.

This pack also includes progression maps for new level 2 pathways.



Important information about the progression maps

These progression maps are illustrative examples of possible routes and are based on DfE-published subject content, alongside information from [UCAS](#), [Skills England Occupational Maps](#), the [Skills England Apprenticeship Finder](#) and the [National Careers Service](#).

Individual progression opportunities will vary depending on factors such as prior attainment, subject combinations, provider entry requirements, employer recruitment practices, and the availability of opportunities locally and nationally. Careers advisors and local education providers will need to provide further information on their areas' local skills needs.

The maps include examples of higher education courses, apprenticeships and careers, and the arrows indicate potential pathways for progression. University entry requirements vary by institution and course, and students should check specific requirements, such as required subject combinations and grade expectations, before making decisions about their post-16 study programme.

Please note that not all Foundation Degrees, Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) shown are approved Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). The full list of [approved HTQs](#) is available on GOV.UK.

Learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may have access to additional support and personalised progression options. For personalised advice, speak to a careers adviser or local education provider.

For further information, see the [Post-16 Pathways Implementation Plan](#) and the [Technical and Vocational Qualifications Support Pack](#). [Summary posters](#) for each subject are also available to download. Further [explainers](#) on Post-16 Pathways and information on [qualification levels](#) is available on GOV.UK.

A glossary of key terms can be found on [pages 27–29](#).



Department
for Education

V LEVELS

V Levels

For delivery from 2027



Introduction to V Levels

V Levels are level 3 vocational qualifications for students who would like to explore potential career interests and keep options open.

The content is nationally-set by the Department for Education (DfE) and linked to occupational standards. It covers core knowledge and skills related to an employment sector. V Levels are not designed to provide occupational competence.

V Levels are 360 Guided Learning Hours (GLH), the same as an A Level, and can be taken with other V Levels or A Levels.* They cannot be taken with T Levels which are 1080 GLH and are a standalone qualification.

They lead to higher education or apprenticeships. They are not designed to lead to employment.

A V Level may suit students who want to explore a sector while combining subjects and keeping future options open. A T Level is a large (3 A Level equivalent), standalone technical programme focused on a particular occupational area and includes an industry placement.



V Levels will be rolled out in four tranches from 2027 to 2030.
In 2027 DfE will roll out V Levels in:

- **Education**
- **Digital Systems and Data**
- **Accounting and Finance**

DfE published in July 2026 the *subject content for each V Level* which will be rolled out in 2027.

*During the transition period to 2030, V Levels can be combined with other qualifications in the level 3 landscape (e.g. Applied General Qualifications) until they are replaced by V Levels in their subject areas.

V LEVELS

How to read the V Level progression maps

Each example progression pathway slide is split horizontally into 4 levels (level 3 to level 6).

Level 3 is the level of V, T and A Levels.

In each level there are boxes in blue and yellow. These boxes correspond to types of higher education qualifications (blue) and apprenticeships (yellow). The arrows between the boxes show what students could do next and where this could lead. These show possible progression, not guaranteed entry. Students may be able to move between routes too.

In the blue and yellow boxes there is an indication of the duration of the qualification or apprenticeship taken full-time and examples. The examples of apprenticeships have come from the **Skills England Apprenticeship Finder**.

To the right of the slide, there are boxes in pink. These boxes have examples of employment opportunities at each level. These have come from the **Skills England Occupational Maps**. For Accounting and Finance V Level progression map there is also a bright pink box which indicates professional qualifications.

The employment opportunities in the pink box at the top have come from the **National Careers Service**.



Purpose of the **Education V Level**

The purpose of the **Education V Level** is to enable students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve the following work-related purposes:



1. Plan well-structured learning sessions which promote learning and include opportunities to measure that learning has taken place



2. Propose how to communicate purposefully with parents, families, carers and other professionals to improve outcomes for students



3. Recommend adaptations to learning sessions to promote inclusion, access, participation and progress



4. Plan for and carry out risk assessments for learning activities in two contrasting learning environments to ensure safe delivery of learning



5. Evaluate assessment information, records and data to set specific individual learning goals to feed back to students as part of the assess-teach feedback cycle

This information is from the subject content published in July 2026.

Through this, students will develop transferable skills and develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of the key theories and principles which support effective practice in the subject.

V LEVELS

Education Progression Map

**Possible career pathways
(including longer-term opportunities)**

There are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Youth Worker**, **Healthy Play Specialist**, **Headteacher**.

Level 3

Early Years Educator* (only if the L3 EYE apprenticeship or another full and relevant qualification is taken)
Teaching Assistant

Level 4

Early Years Educator* (only if a full and relevant qualification is taken)

Level 5

FE Learning and Skills Teacher, SEND Specialist Teaching Assistant or Early Years Educator/ Lead Practitioner** (only if a full and relevant qualification is taken)

Level 6

Early years education professional or teacher

★ **START HERE**

Education V Level
 +
 2 V Levels or
 2 A Levels
 or 1 V Level and 1 A Level†

Advanced apprenticeship
Normally around 12-18 months
Examples: Teaching Assistant, Education Technician, Early Years Educator

Higher National Certificate
1 year full-time
Example: HNC Education and Learning

Foundation degree
2 years full-time
Example: FdA Early Childhood Studies

Higher National Diploma
2 years full-time
Example: HND Early Childhood Education and Care

Higher apprenticeship (Level 5)
Normally around 18- 24 months
Examples: Early Years Lead Practitioner, Specialist Teaching Assistant

BA (Hons) Top-Up
1 year full-time
Examples: BA (Hons) Education Studies Top-Up, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies Top-Up

BA (Hons)
3 years full-time
Examples: Bachelor of Education, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies, BA (Hons)

Degree Level Apprenticeship
Normally around 3-4 years
Examples: Teacher Degree Apprenticeship

★ **Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.**

*The [Early Years Qualifications List](#) spreadsheet lists all UK qualifications that are currently approved by DfE as full and relevant.

†There will be qualifications other than V Levels and A Levels available to take alongside the Education V Level until 2030

V Level Education: further information

POST-16 PATHWAYS

Available from 2027

V Level: EDUCATION

Ideal for students who want to make a positive difference to learning and development.

What is this course?

A practical qualification that develops knowledge and skills used across education settings from early years through to adult learning.

Skills you'll develop

- Professional communication
- Lesson planning
- Inclusion and learner support
- Critical thinking
- Observation and evaluation
- Reflective practice



You will learn how to:

- Plan engaging learning sessions
- Work with parents, carers and professionals
- Adapt learning to support inclusion
- Assess risks and promote safe learning environments
- Use assessment information to support learner progress

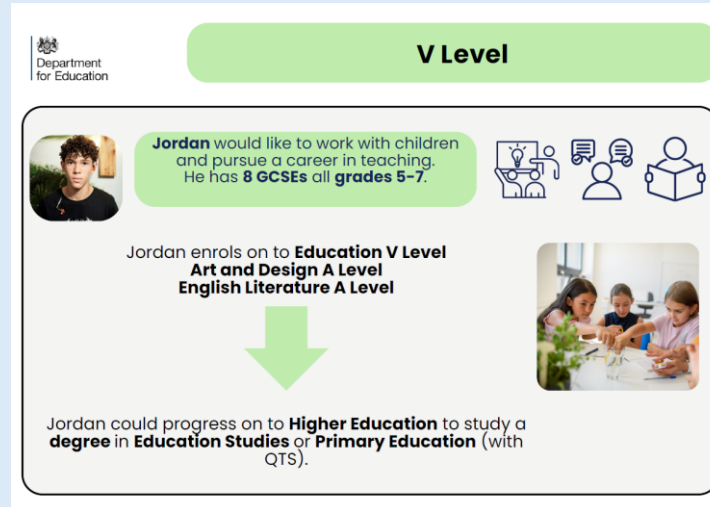


Progression – this qualification can lead to:

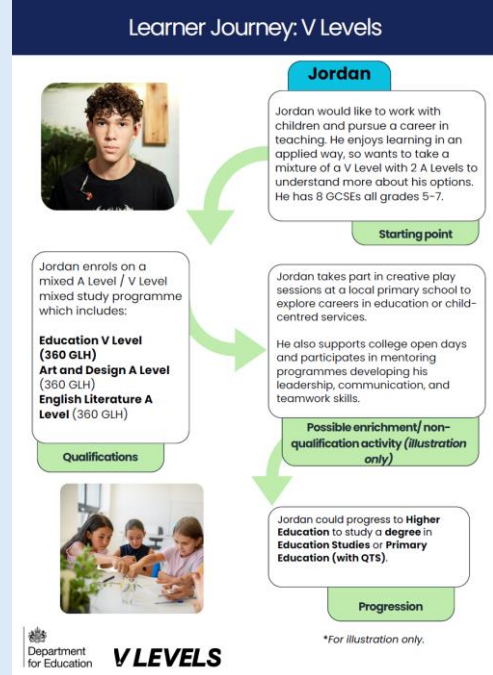
- Higher education
- Teaching Assistant
- Apprenticeships
- Pathways into employment in early years and education, after taking a related degree

Download subject posters [here](#)

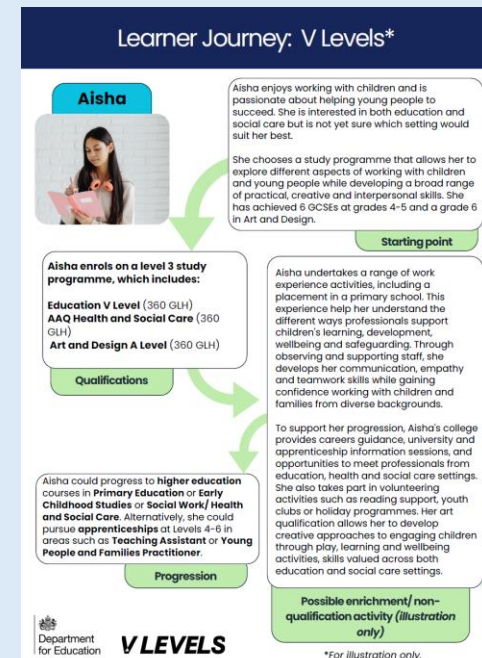
Who might choose the Education V Level?
Students interested in education, childcare and supporting young people.



Download short learner journeys [here](#)



Download detailed learner journeys [here](#)



Purpose of the **Digital Systems and Data V Level**

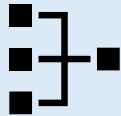
The purpose of the **Digital Systems and Data V Level** is to enable students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve the following work-related purposes:



1. Prepare, analyse, interpret and present data from different sources to support conclusions and decision making



2. Apply security protocols and interpret system information to detect and escalate cyber security concerns



3. Prepare, configure and assure readiness of digital systems to meet user needs (optional)



4. Design and create a digital solution to meet defined user needs (optional)

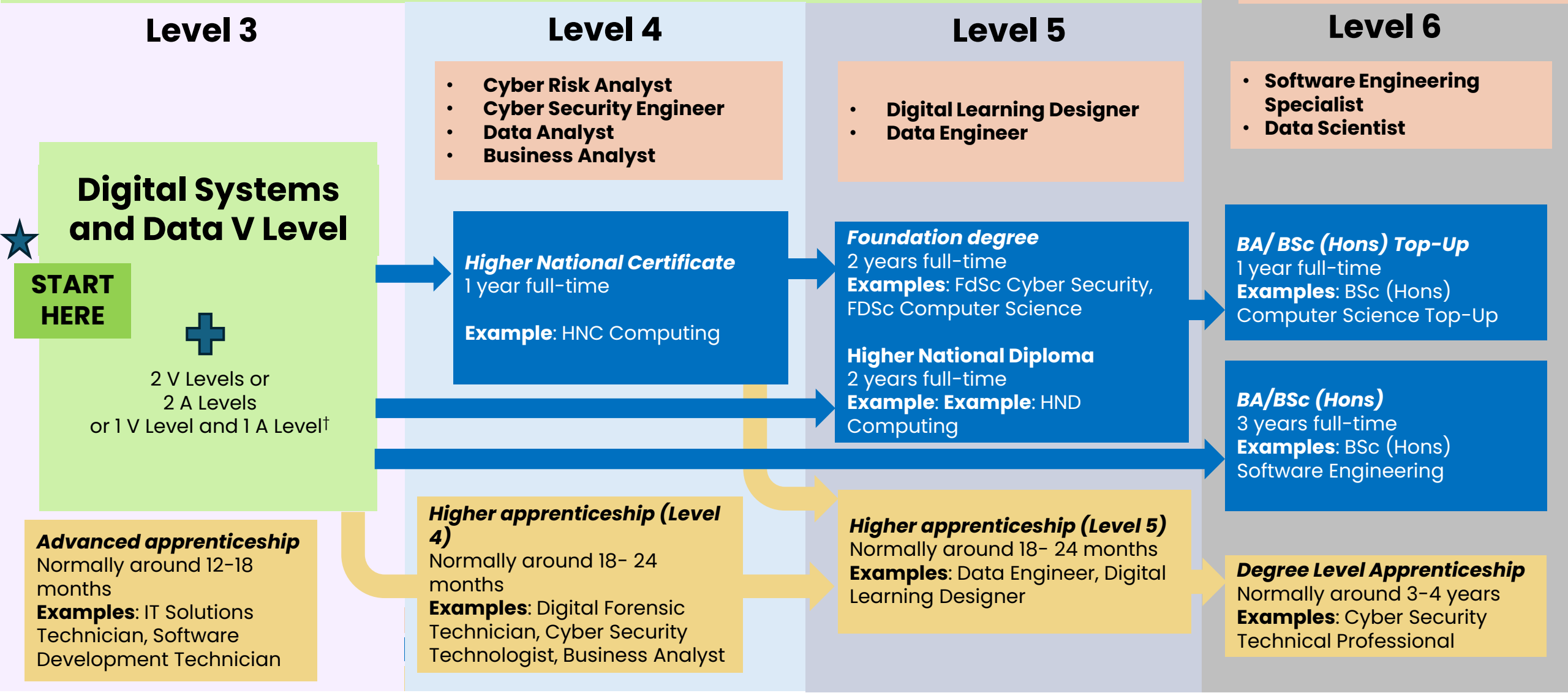
This information is from the subject content published in July 2026.

Through this, students will develop transferable skills and develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of the key theories and principles which support effective practice in the subject.

V LEVELS Digital Systems and Data V Level Progression Map

Possible career pathways
(including longer-term opportunities)

There are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Software Developer**, **AI Engineer** and **IT Support Technician**.



★ Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.

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†There will be qualifications other than V Levels and A Levels available to take alongside the Education V Level until 2030

POST-16 PATHWAYS

V Level:
DIGITAL SYSTEMS AND DATA

What is this course?

Skills you'll develop

-



You will learn how to:

- Analyse and present data to support decision making
- Identify and respond to cyber security threats
- Configure, test and maintain digital systems
- Design digital solutions to meet user needs
- Work responsibly with AI and emerging technologies



Progression – this qualification can lead to:

- University courses in Computing, IT or Data Science
- Higher or Degree Apprenticeships
- After further study, IT-related careers

V LEVELS

Students interested in technology, data and digital problem-solving.



V Level

Michaela takes a mixture of level 3 qualifications to help her focus her options and to support her progression to the right HE course or apprenticeship. She achieved **6 GCSEs grade 4-6** including a grade 6 in **maths** and a **grade 3 in English**.



**Michaela enrolls on to Digital Systems and Data V Level
Extended Certificate in Business Applied General
Qualification (AGQ)
AAQ Applied Science
English GCSE**



Michaela could progress on to a **HE course in computing / IT** or a **level 4 apprenticeship** – examples include **Data Analyst, Software Developer, Business Analyst, Cyber Security** and at **level 5** – **Data Engineer**.



Michaella



Michaela knows she wants to get into the digital IT sector. She takes a mixture of V Levels and A Levels to help her focus her options and to support her progression to the right HE course. She will need to continue to study English. She has achieved 6 GCSEs grade 4-6, and a grade 6 in maths and grade 3 in English.

Starting point

Michaela enrolls on a L3 study programme, which includes:

Digital Systems and Data V Level
(360 GLH)
Extended Certificate in Business
Applied General Qualification (AGQ)
(360 GLH)
AAQ Applied Science (360 GLH)
English GCSE resit (240 GLH)

Michaella finds work experience in the IT department of her local council, allowing her to gain real-world experience and build her confidence.

Through observing and supporting tasks, she gains a clearer understanding of how and the IT team collaborate, while developing her confidence, communication skills and awareness of industry standards within a professional setting.

To support her personal development and progression, Michaela's college offer career coaching, UCAS preparation sessions, and mentoring from professionals in the IT sector. Confidence-building workshops and goal-setting activities help her refine her interests and prepare for higher education.

Qualifications

Michaela could progress on to a **Higher Education course in computing / IT** or a level 4 **apprenticeship** – examples include **Data Analyst, Software Developer, Business Analyst or Cyber Security** and at Level 5 Data Engineer.

In addition to face-to-face English timetabled lessons, Michaela is supported with additional study support for her GCSE resit through personalised online programmes.

Possible enrichment/ non-qualification activity (*illustration only*)



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Progression

V LEVELS

*For illustration only.

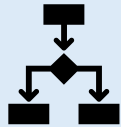
Download short learner journeys [here](#)

Download detailed learner journeys [here](#)

Download subject posters [here](#)

Purpose of the **Accounting and Finance V Level**

The purpose of the **Accounting and Finance V Level** is to enable students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve the following work-related purposes:



1. Be able to interpret financial and accounting information to support organisation decision making



2. Be able to analyse and evaluate organisational financial performance and position



3. Be able to evaluate financial decision making in organisational contexts



4. Be able to evaluate the ethical and regulatory context of accounting and finance within organisational settings



5. Be able to communicate and present financial and accounting information in organisational contexts

This information is from the subject content published in July 2026.

Through this, students will develop transferable skills and develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of the key theories and principles which support effective practice in the subject.

V LEVELS Accounting and Finance V Level Progression Map

**Possible career pathways
(including longer-term opportunities)**

There are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Auditor, Financial Adviser** and **Public Finance Accountant**.

Level 3

Level 4

Level 5

Level 6

There are some professions which require **professional qualifications**, such as those delivered by the Association of Accounting Technicians, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

Accounting and Finance V Level

★
**START
HERE**



2 V Levels or
2 A Levels
or 1 V Level and 1 A Level†

Advanced apprenticeship

Normally around 12-18 months

Examples: Mortgage Adviser, Assistant Accountant

- **Actuarial Technician**
- **Financial Planner**
- **Professional Accounting Technician**

Higher National Certificate

1 year full-time

Example: HNC Banking and Finance

- **Payroll Assistant Manager**
- **Assistant Pay and Benefits Manager**

Foundation degree

2 years full-time

Examples: FDISc Accounting and Finance, FSc Financial Services

Higher National Diploma

2 years full-time

Example: HND Accounting and Finance

- **Senior Compliance and Risk Specialist**
- **Investment Banker**

BA/ BSc (Hons) Top-Up

1 year full-time

Examples: BSc (Hons) Accounting Top-Up, BSc (Hons) Finance Top-Up

BA/BSc (Hons)

3 years full-time

Examples: BA Accountancy, BSc Accounting and Finance, BSc Economics

Higher apprenticeship (Level 4)

Normally around 18- 24 months

Examples: Internal Audit Practitioner, Actuarial Technician

Higher apprenticeship (Level 5)

Normally around 18- 24 months

Example: Payroll Assistant Manager

Degree Level Apprenticeship

Normally around 3-4 years

Example: Senior Compliance and Risk Specialist

★ **Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.**

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†There will be qualifications other than V Levels and A Levels available to take alongside the Education V Level until 2030

V Level Accounting and Finance: further information

POST-16 PATHWAYS

Available from 2027

V Level: ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

Ideal for students who enjoy working with numbers, solving problems and understanding how organisations make financial decisions.

What is this course?

A practical qualification that helps students understand how organisations manage money, make financial decisions and measure success.

You will learn how to:

- Interpret financial information
- Analyse business performance
- Use financial data to support decision making
- Understand ethics and professional responsibilities
- Present financial information clearly to different audiences

Skills you'll develop:

- Numerical reasoning
- Analytical thinking
- Decision making
- Business awareness
- Professional communication
- Problem solving

Topics include:

- Profit and loss
- Financial statements
- Budgeting
- Business performance
- Investment decisions
- Financial ethics
- Digital finance tools




Progression – this qualification can lead to:

- Accounting and Finance degrees
- Business and Economics courses
- Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
- After further study, careers in accounting, banking, business and finance

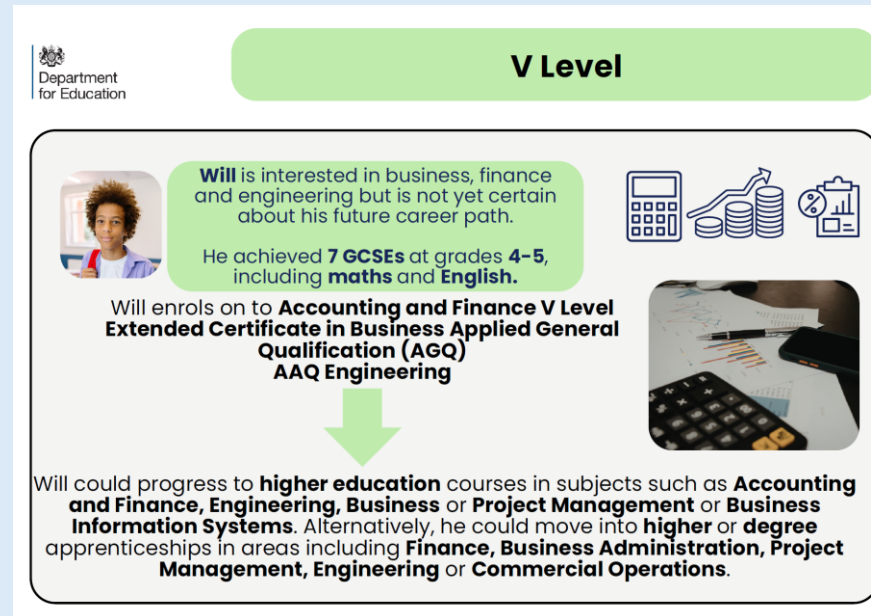




V LEVELS

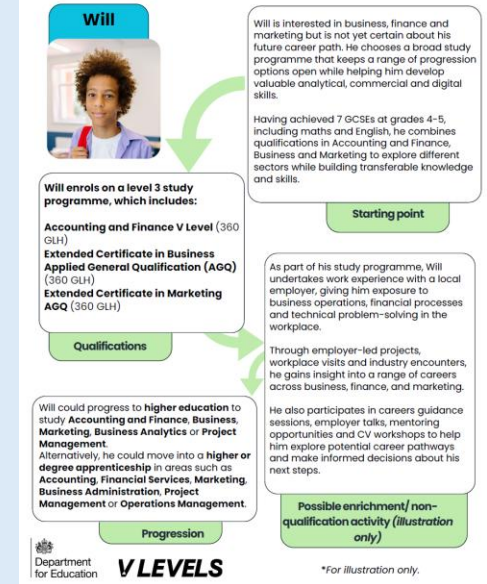
Who might choose the Accounting and Finance V Level?

Students interested in business, finance and analysing information.



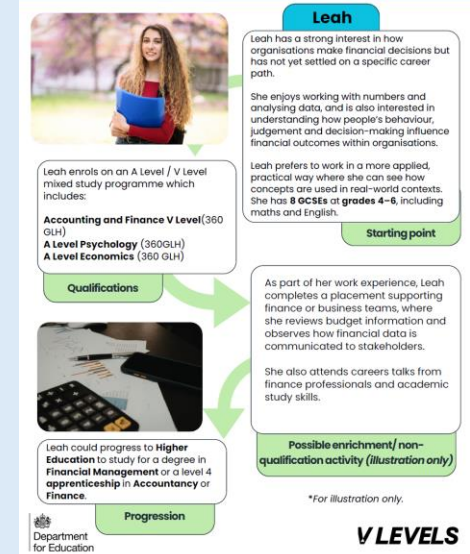
Download short learner journeys [here](#)

Learner Journey: V Levels*



Download detailed learner journeys [here](#)

Learner Journey: V Levels*



Download subject posters [here](#)



Department
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OCCUPATIONAL
CERTIFICATES

FOUNDATION
CERTIFICATES

Foundation and Occupational Certificates

For delivery from 2027



Introduction to level 2 pathways

From 2027, students will have the choice of two new pathways at level 2. The **Foundation Certificate**, which supports progression into a study programme of V Levels and/or A levels, or a T Level; or the **Occupational Certificate**, which is a two-year programme that supports progression to a skilled job.

The pathways are designed to ensure that students have time to also take English and/or maths GCSE as appropriate and to take the relevant enrichment, employability and pastoral activities that they need, to develop the skills, behaviours, confidence and resilience required to successfully reach their chosen destination.

Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates are therefore relatively small qualifications, to allow the time required for additional support students may need. The content is nationally-set by DfE.

New level 2 pathways will be rolled out in four tranches from 2027 to 2030.

In 2027 DfE will roll out Foundation and Occupational Certificates in:

- **Education and Early Years**
- **Digital** (Foundation Certificate only)
- **Catering and Hospitality** (Occupational Certificate only)

DfE published in July 2026 the subject content for foundation and occupational certificates which will be rolled out in 2027.



Purpose of **Foundation** and **Occupational** Certificates

These qualifications are designed for different destinations. Neither qualification is better than the other.

	Foundation Certificate	Occupational Certificate
	Main aim: Prepare for level 3 study	Main aim: Prepare for skilled work, an apprenticeship or further training
	Duration: 1 year	Duration: 2 years
	May suit learners who: Want to build subject knowledge, confidence and study skills before level 3	May suit learners who: Prefer sustained practical and occupational learning
	Includes: English and maths if needed, enrichment, and wider support	Includes: English and maths if needed, work placement, employability and wider support
	Possible next step: V Level, A Level, T Level or apprenticeship	Possible next step: Employment, apprenticeship or further study

How to read the level 2 progression maps

Each example progression pathway slide is split horizontally into 2 levels (level 2 and level 3). Level 2 is the same level as GCSE and level 3 is the same level as V, T and A Levels. Start at level 2 and follow the arrows to explore options.

In each level there are boxes in purple and yellow. These boxes correspond to types of further education options (purple) and apprenticeships (yellow). The arrows between the boxes show what students could do next and where this could lead. These show possible progression, not guaranteed entry. Students may be able to move between routes too

In the purple and yellow boxes there is an indication of the duration of the qualification or apprenticeship taken full-time and examples. The examples of apprenticeships have come from the **Skills England Apprenticeship Finder**.

To the right of the slide, there are boxes in pink. These boxes have examples of employment opportunities at each level. These have come from the **Skills England Occupational Maps**.

The employment opportunities in the pink box at the top have come from the **National Careers Service**.

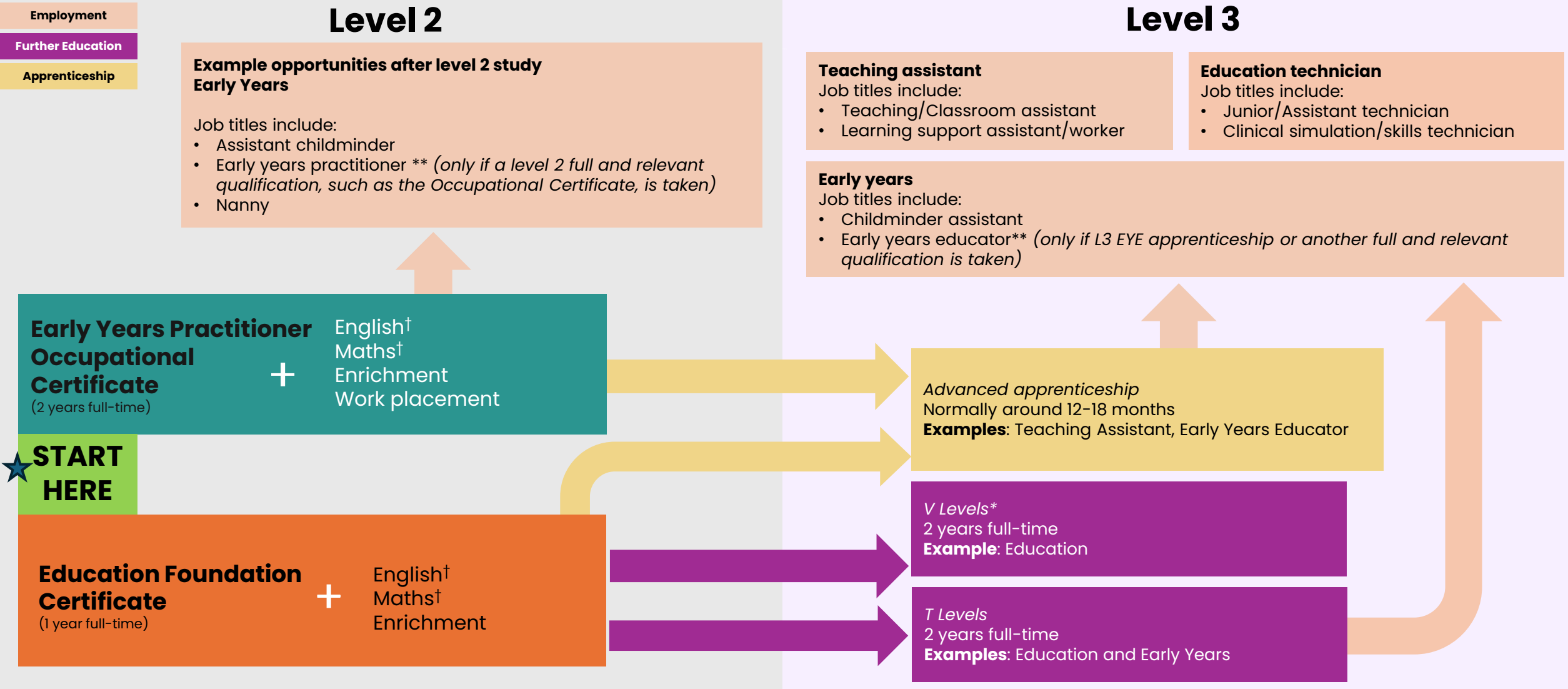


**FOUNDATION
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**OCCUPATIONAL
CERTIFICATES**

Education and Early Years Progression Map

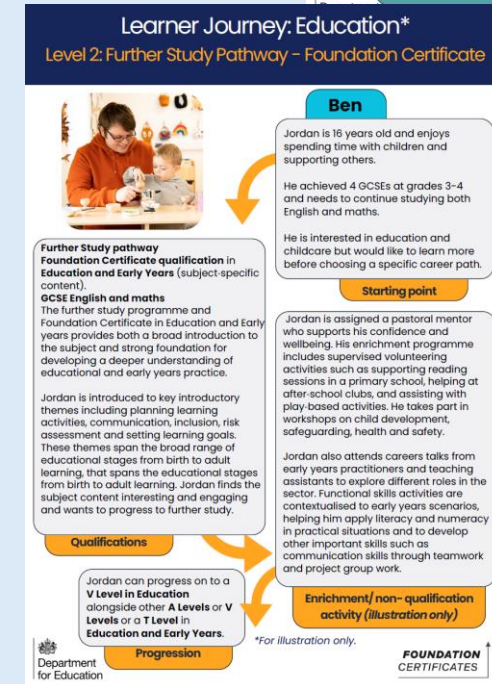
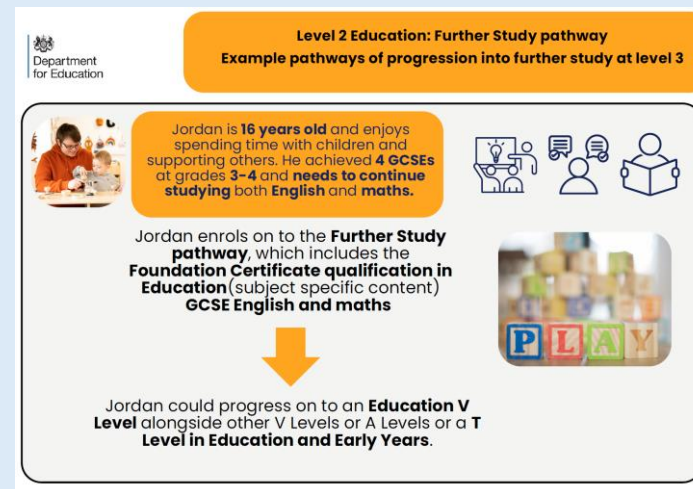
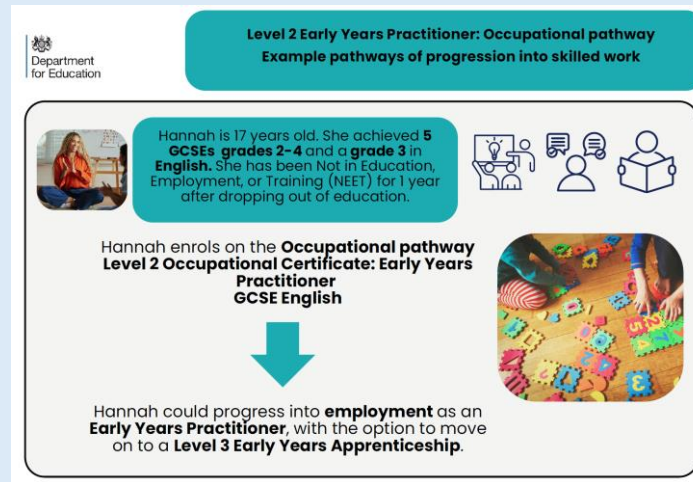
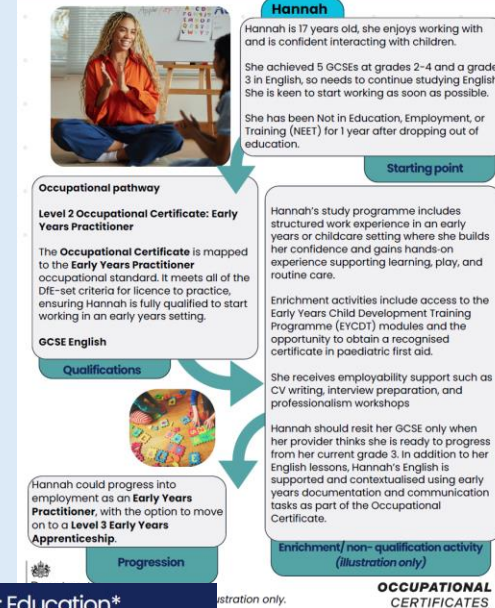
Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)
If you want to go straight into work, there are **Nursery, Nanny** and **Childminder** opportunities. If you want to study further there are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Youth Worker, Healthy Play Specialist, Headteacher**.



★ Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.

*V Levels can be studied alongside A Levels and/or V Levels in other subjects
** The [Early Years Qualifications List](#) spreadsheet lists all full and relevant UK qualifications currently approved by DfE.
† If student needs to continue studying English or maths alongside the Foundation or Occupational Certificate.

Level 2 Education and Early Years: further information



Download short learner journeys [here](#)

Download detailed learner journeys [here](#)

POST-16 PATHWAYS
Available from 2027

Occupational Certificate: EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONER

Ideal for students who enjoy working with babies and young children and want a direct route into the early years sector.

What is this course?
A career-focused qualification that prepares students to work with babies and young children in early years settings such as nurseries, pre-schools and reception classes.

Practical experience
Includes significant workplace experience to help build real-world skills and confidence.

You will learn about:

- Child development from birth to age 5
- Safeguarding and child protection
- Working with families and professionals
- Environmental sustainability in childcare
- Responding appropriately to first-aid situations
- Supporting learning through play

Skills you'll develop

- Communication and teamwork
- Caring and professional behaviour
- Problem solving
- Observation skills
- Responsibility

Progression - this qualification can lead to:

- Employment as an Early Years Practitioner
- Careers supporting children's learning and development
- Apprenticeships in the early years sector

OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES
Department for Education

POST-16 PATHWAYS
Available from 2027

Foundation Certificate: EDUCATION

Ideal for students who enjoy helping others learn, develop and succeed and are interested in working in educational settings.

What is this course?
This course introduces students to teaching methods and education practice across various age groups and in different education settings. It is designed to prepare students interested in pursuing further study in education, early years or child development.

Skills you'll develop

- Communication
- Planning
- Organisation
- Teamwork
- Observation
- Decision making

You will learn how to:

- Plan learning activities
- Communicate with learners, families and professionals
- Support inclusion and participation for all learners
- Carry out risk assessments and promote safety
- Interpret assessment information to support student progress

Progression - this qualification can lead to:

- Education V Level
- T Level Education & Early Years
- Apprenticeships
- Further study in teaching, education, childcare or child development

FOUNDATION CERTIFICATES
Department for Education

Download subject posters [here](#)

If you want to study further afterwards, there are many opportunities at different levels, including **Support Technician**, **Software Developer**, **Network Engineer** and **Programmer**. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience.

- Employment
- Further Education
- Apprenticeship

Level 2

Level 3

Software development technician

Job titles include:

- Junior developer/programmer
- Junior application support analyst

IT solutions technician

Job titles include:

- Junior database technician
- Junior dev-ops engineer

Data technician

Job titles include:

- Data support analyst
- Junior data/information analyst

Radio network technician

Job titles include:

- Communications radio engineer
- Radio network engineer/technician

Advanced apprenticeship
Normally around 12-18 months
Examples: Teaching Assistant, Early Years Educator

A Levels*
2 years full-time
Example: Education

V Levels*
2 years full-time
Example: Digital Systems and Data

T Levels (2 years full-time)
Examples: Digital Data Analytics, Digital Software Development, Digital Support and Security

★ START
HERE

Digital Foundation Certificate

(1 year full-time)

+

English[†]

Maths[†]

Enrichment

★ Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.

*V Levels can be studied alongside A Levels and/or V Levels in other subjects
† If student needs to continue studying English or maths alongside the Foundation Certificate.

Level 2 Digital Systems and Data: further information

POST-16 PATHWAYS

Available from 2027

Foundation Certificate: DIGITAL SYSTEMS AND DATA

Ideal for students who enjoy technology and want a practical introduction to digital skills before progressing to level 3 study.

What is this course?

Are you interested in technology, data, cyber security and programming? This course introduces the key skills used in today's digital world and helps prepare you for further study at level 3.

Skills you'll develop

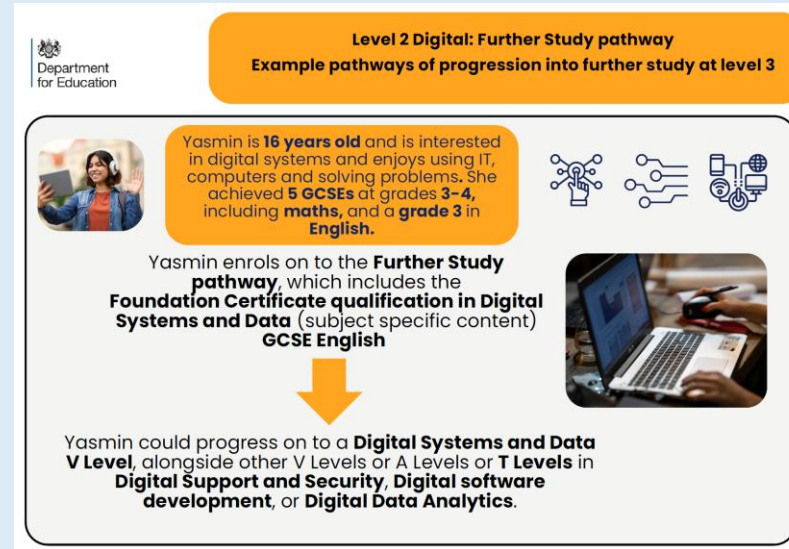
- Digital systems literacy
- Data interpretation
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Planning and self-management
- Evaluating and investigating using digital online tools

You will learn how to:

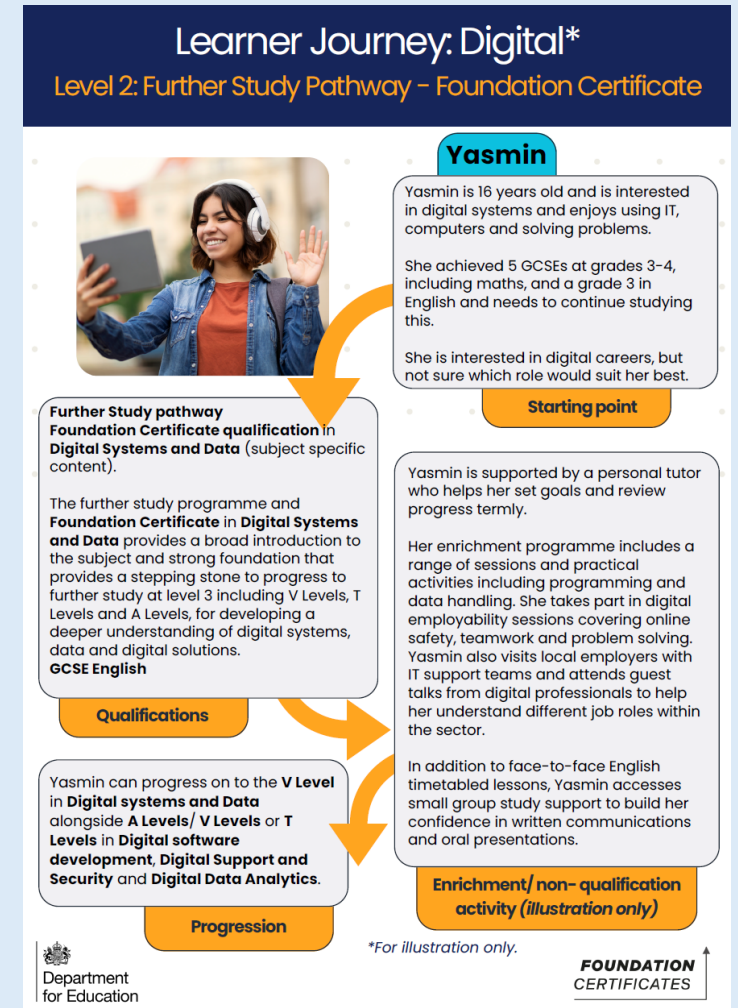
- Work with data in a digital context
- Configure and secure digital systems
- Plan, test and develop simple programs
- Set up hardware and software components and systems
- Research digital information and make evidence-based recommendations

Progression - this qualification can lead to:

- Digital Systems & Data V Level
- Digital T Levels
- A Level Computer Science
- Apprenticeships
- Careers in IT, cyber security, software development and data analysis



Download short learner journeys [here](#)



Download detailed learner journeys [here](#)

Download subject posters [here](#)

Catering and Hospitality Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)

If you want to go straight into work, there are **Nursery**, **Nanny** and **Childminder** opportunities. If you want to study further there are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Youth Worker**, **Healthy Play Specialist**, **Headteacher**.

Level 2

Food/beverage team member

Job titles include:

- Waiter/waitress
- Bar staff

Hospitality team member

Job titles include:

- Housekeepers
- Customer service

Baker

Craft/Plant/Retail baker

Commis chef

Preparing food and basic cooking tasks in a kitchen under supervision

Production chef

Work in a team in kitchen environments

Culinary Skills Occupational Certificate

(2 years full-time)

+ English†
Maths†
Enrichment

★ **START HERE**

Hospitality Occupational Certificate

(2 years full-time)

+ English†
Maths†
Enrichment

Level 3

Hospitality supervisor

Job titles include:

- Bar supervisor
- Events supervisor
- Food and beverage supervisor
- Front office supervisor
- Hospitality outlet supervisor
- House keeping supervisor

Lead baker

Job titles include:

- Artisan baker
- Bakery team leader
- Product development tech.

Chef de partie

Job titles include:

- Chef
- Line chef
- Section chef

Pastry chef

Job titles include:

- Cake decorator
- Cake designer

Senior production chef

Job titles include:

- Head chef
- Cook

Advanced apprenticeship

Normally around 12-18 months

Examples: Hospitality supervisor, Senior production chef, Pastry chef, Lead baker, Chef de partie

T Levels

2 years full-time

Examples: Hospitality and Catering (introduction intended for 2029)

Level 2 Catering and Hospitality: further information

POST-16 PATHWAYS

Available from 2027

Occupational Certificate: HOSPITALITY

Ideal for students who enjoy working with people, creating positive customer experiences and being part of a busy, professional team.

What is this course?

This practical qualification prepares students for customer-facing roles across the hospitality sector. Students develop professional customer service, teamwork and hospitality skills while learning how successful hospitality businesses operate.

Pathways available

Food & Beverage pathway – Food & Beverage Assistant, Food and Beverage Team member, Bar/counter, Waiter/Waitress

Accommodation pathway – Hospitality team member, Hospitality Accommodation team member, General assistant

You will learn how to:

- Deliver excellent customer service
- Communicate confidently with guests and customers
- Support food and drink service
- Handle payments and transactions
- Work effectively as part of a team
- Support sustainable and efficient operations
- Maintain safety, hygiene and professional standards



Skills you'll develop

- Customer service
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Professionalism
- Time management
- Problem solving
- Digital skills
- Humour and cash handling

Food & Beverage pathway:

- Students will learn how to:
- Serve food and drinks professionally
- Support ordering and service operations
- Promote products and improve customer experience
- Tellor communication to different customers
- Respond to feedback and service issues

Accommodation pathway:

- Students will learn how to:
- Support guest services and reception activities
- Prepare and maintain guest accommodation
- Manage guest requests and room services
- Follow professional cleaning standards
- Support food and beverage service where required
- Enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty



Progression – this qualification can lead to:

- Food and Beverage Team Member
- Hotel Assistant
- Front of House Assistant
- Accommodation Team Member
- Guest Services Assistant
- Hospitality Apprenticeships



OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES

POST-16 PATHWAYS

Available from 2027

Occupational Certificate: CULINARY SKILLS

Ideal for students who enjoy practical learning, cooking, baking and working in fast-paced, creative environments.

What is this course?

Love cooking, baking and creating great food? This practical qualification prepares students for careers in professional kitchens, bakeries and food production environments. You'll work as part of a team to prepare, cook, and finish a wide range of food items from fresh across all sections in a kitchen/bakery.

Skills you'll develop

- Food preparation and cooking techniques
- Baking and pastry skills
- Teamwork and communication
- Organisation and planning
- Problem solving
- Attention to detail

Typical practical activities:

Preparing soups and salads, pasta and rice dishes, meat, fish and poultry dishes, sauces and stocks, bread products, cakes, cookies and desserts and plant-based and specialist dishes.



Career opportunities – this qualification can lead to:

- Commis Chef
- Production Chef
- Baker
- Kitchen Assistant
- Catering Assistant
- Apprenticeships within the hospitality and catering sector



OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES



Level 2 Hospitality: Occupational pathway Example pathways of progression into skilled work



Eleni is 16 years old. She is outgoing and enjoys working with people. She achieved **3 GCSEs at grades 2-3**.



Eleni enrolls on the **Occupational pathway Level 2 Occupational Certificate: Hospitality** and follows the **food and beverage team** pathway.

GCSE English and maths



Eleni could progress into **employment** in the **hospitality sector**, with the option to move on to a **level 3 Hospitality Apprenticeship**.



Level 2 Culinary Skills: Occupational pathway Example pathways of progression into skilled work



Callum is 16 years old. He achieved **4 GCSEs at grades 2-4** and needs to continue studying **English and maths**. He is keen to start work as soon as possible.



Callum enrolls on the **Occupational pathway Level 2 Occupational Certificate: Culinary Skills**

GCSE English and maths



Callum could progress into **employment** as a **Kitchen Assistant** or **Commis Chef** with a view to progressing onto a **Level 3 Culinary or Professional Cookery Apprenticeship**.



Learner Journey: Culinary Skills*

Level 2: Occupational Pathway – Occupational Certificate



Callum

Callum is 16 years old and enjoys cooking at home. He achieved 4 GCSEs at grades 2-4 and needs to continue studying English and maths.

He prefers practical learning and thinks he would like to work in a professional kitchen environment. He is keen to start work as soon as possible.

Starting point

Occupational pathway

Level 2 Occupational Certificate in Culinary Skills

The Occupational Certificate is aligned to **commis chef and production chef** occupational standards. It shares some of its content with the Occupational Certificate in Hospitality and ensures Callum gains an insight into both kitchen operations and front of house and has a good understanding of the different organisations that employ kitchen staff.

Qualifications

Callum progresses into employment as a **Kitchen Assistant** or **Commis Chef** with a view to progressing onto a **Level 3 Culinary or Professional Cookery Apprenticeship**.

Progression

Callum's enrichment includes work experience in a local café or restaurant, gaining insight into professional kitchen routines and employer expectations.

Additional activities include participation in college pop-up restaurants and basic employability skills sessions such as time management and communication.

With prior attainment of grade 2 in English and maths, students like Callum will in future be able to study the new stepping stone to GCSE qualification in his first year. This will help him build the foundational knowledge, so he is then able to study for the GCSE the following year.

As well as those lessons, his English and maths is also contextualised in his Occupational Certificate through recipe costing, measurements, and portion control.

Enrichment/ non-qualification activity (illustration only)



*For illustration only.

OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES

Learner Journey: Hospitality*

Level 2: Occupational Pathway – Occupational Certificate



Eleni

Eleni is 16 years old. She is outgoing and enjoys working with people. She achieved 3 GCSEs at grades 2-3.

She would like a customer-facing role and is interested in hospitality and events.

Starting point

Occupational pathway

Level 2 Occupational Certificate in Hospitality

The Occupational Certificate aligns to the **Food and Beverage Team Member** and **Accommodation Team Member** occupational standards.

GCSE English and maths

Eleni studies the same introductory modules as students who are taking a culinary qualification so she learns how a professional kitchen operates as well as front of house operations. She chooses to follow the Food and Beverage pathway as she enjoys the regular interaction with customers.

Qualifications

Eleni could progress into employment in the **hospitality sector**, with the option to move on to a **Level 3 Hospitality Apprenticeship**.

Progression

Enrichment activities include employer talks from the hospitality sector. She also takes part in employability sessions focused on communication, punctuality, and professional behaviour.

Enrichment/ non-qualification activity (illustration only)

OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES

*For illustration only.

Download subject posters [here](#)

Download detailed learner journeys [here](#)



Department
for Education

Glossary



Glossary 1: what the terms mean

A quick guide to the qualifications, routes and other language used in the progression maps



QUALIFICATIONS AND ROUTES

V Level: A new two-year level 3 vocational qualification that can be combined with other V Levels or with A Levels.

A Level: A level 3 subject-based qualification, usually studied over two years.

T Level: A two-year level 3 technical qualification, broadly equal in size to three A Levels.

Foundation Certificate: A one-year level 2 qualification that prepares learners to progress to further level 3 study, with space for English/maths if needed and a wider employability, enrichment and pastoral programme.

Occupational Certificate: A two-year level 2 programme preparing for skilled entry level work, with space for English/maths if needed and a wider employability, enrichment and pastoral programme.

Apprenticeship: Paid employment with structured training and study towards an occupational standard.

Further education (FE): Education after age 16 below degree level, including college courses and apprenticeships.

Higher education (HE): Study at Level 4 or above, usually through a university, college or specialist provider.

Employment: A job or career destination. Some roles may need further training, experience or registration.

LEVELS AND NEXT STEPS

Level 2: Study broadly at GCSE grades 4 to 9 standard. It can lead to level 3 study, an apprenticeship or work.

Level 3: Study broadly at V Level, A Level or T Level standard. It can lead to higher study or apprenticeships.

Levels 4 to 6: Higher-level study, from HNC or equivalent at level 4 to a bachelor's degree at level 6.

Advanced apprenticeship: A level 3 apprenticeship.

Higher apprenticeship: An apprenticeship at level 4 or 5 in the pathways shown.

Degree apprenticeship: A level 6 apprenticeship combining paid work with degree-level study.

Foundation degree: A level 5 higher education qualification, usually taking two years full-time.

HNC: Higher National Certificate: a level 4 higher education qualification, usually one year full-time.

HND: Higher National Diploma: a level 5 higher education qualification, usually two years full-time.



Glossary 2: what the terms mean

A quick guide to the qualifications, routes and other language used in the progression maps

HIGHER EDUCATION AND OTHER TERMS

BA/BSc (Hons): A bachelor's degree with honours at level 6, commonly taking three years full-time.

Top-up degree: Usually one year of study that can convert a relevant level 5 qualification into a bachelor's degree.

HTQ: Higher Technical Qualification: an approved level 4 or 5 qualification aligned to employer-led standards.

GLH: Guided Learning Hours: the time a learner is taught or supervised by teaching staff.

Occupational standards: Descriptions of the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to perform an occupation.

Occupational competence: Being able to carry out a specific job to the required standard.

Work placement: Time spent with an employer to develop workplace knowledge, skills and experience.

Enrichment: Activities alongside study that build wider skills, confidence and personal development.

QTS: Qualified Teacher Status

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

ANNEX: Detailed Progression maps

V LEVELS

Education Detailed Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)

There are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Youth Worker**, **Healthy Play Specialist** and **Headteacher**. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience.

Level 6

BA (Hons)
3 years full-time

Examples: Bachelor of Education, BA (Hons) Education Studies, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies, BA (Hons) Education and Psychology, BA (Hons) Education and Sociology

BA (Hons) Top-Up
1 year full-time

Examples: BA (Hons) Education Studies Top-Up, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies Top-Up

Degree Level Apprenticeship
Normally around 3-4 years

Example: Teacher Degree Apprenticeship

Early years education professional

- Early Years Teacher
- Teaching professional**
- Teacher (with QTS)
- FE Teacher (with specialist or vocational knowledge)

Level 5

Foundation degree
2 years full-time
Examples: FdA Children and Young People, FdA Early Childhood Studies, FdA Early Years

Higher National Diploma
2 years full-time
Examples: HND Education and Learning, HND Early Childhood Education and Care, SEND-related qualifications

Higher apprenticeship (Level 5)
Normally around 18- 24 months

Examples: Early Years Lead Practitioner, Specialist Teaching Assistant

- **FE Learning and Skills Teacher**
- **SEND Specialist Teaching Assistant**
- **Early Years Educator or Lead Practitioner***

Level 4

Higher National Certificate
1 year full-time

Examples: HNC Education and Learning, HNC Child Development, HNC in Early Childhood Education and Care.

- **Early Years Educator***

Level 3

Employment examples

Apprenticeship

Higher Education

START HERE*

Education V Level



2 V Levels or
2 A Levels
or 1 V Level and 1 A Level†

Advanced apprenticeship
Normally around 12-18 months

Examples: Teaching Assistant, Education Technician, Early Years Educator

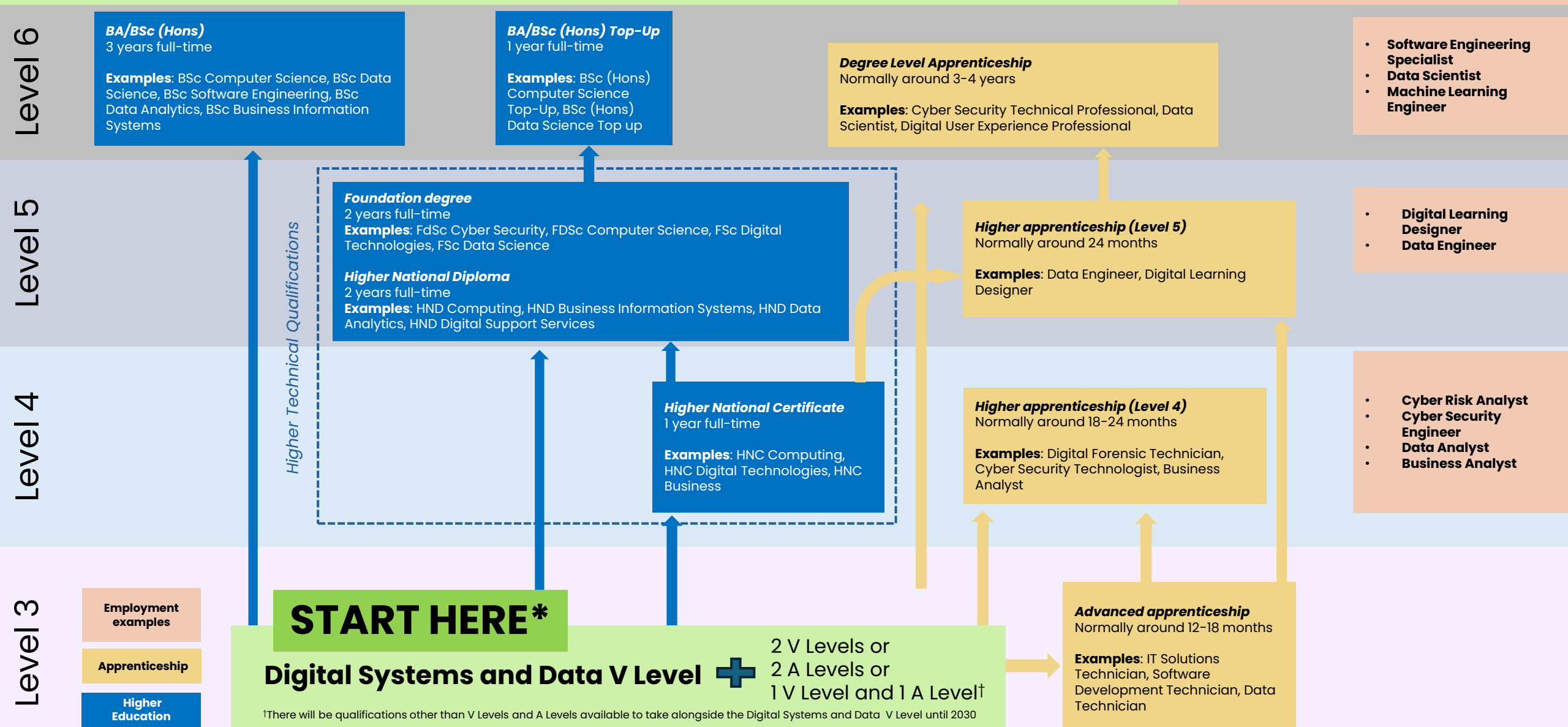
- **Early Years Educator***
(only if the L3 EYE apprenticeship or another full and relevant qualification is taken)
- **Teaching Assistant**

†There will be qualifications other than V Levels and A Levels available to take alongside the Education V Level until 2030

V LEVELS

Digital Systems and Data Detailed Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)
There are employment opportunities at different levels, including **Software Developer**, **AI Engineer** and **IT Support Technician**. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience.



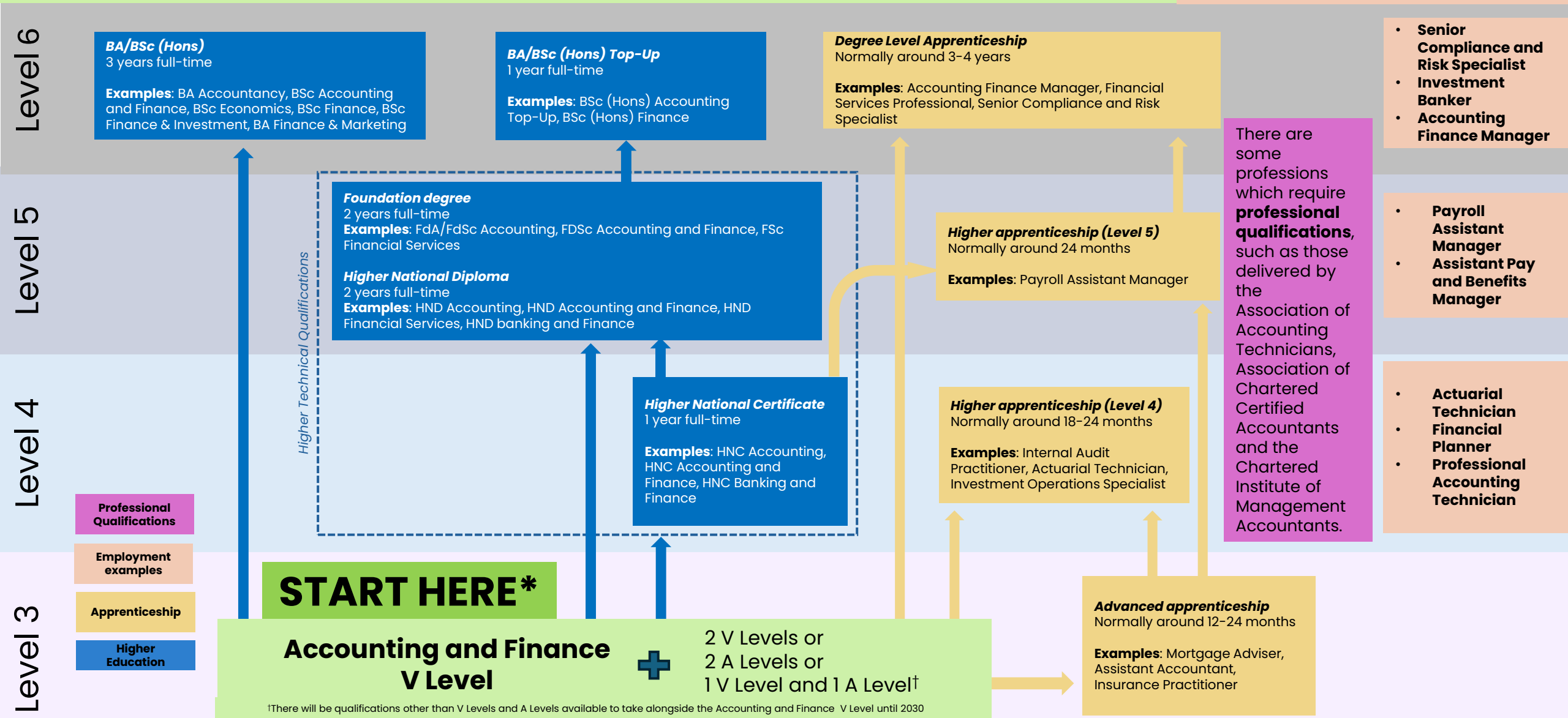
***Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing**

V LEVELS

Accounting and Finance Detailed Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)

There are related employment opportunities at different levels, including **Auditor, Financial Adviser** and **Public Finance Accountant**. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience..



***Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.**

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CERTIFICATES**

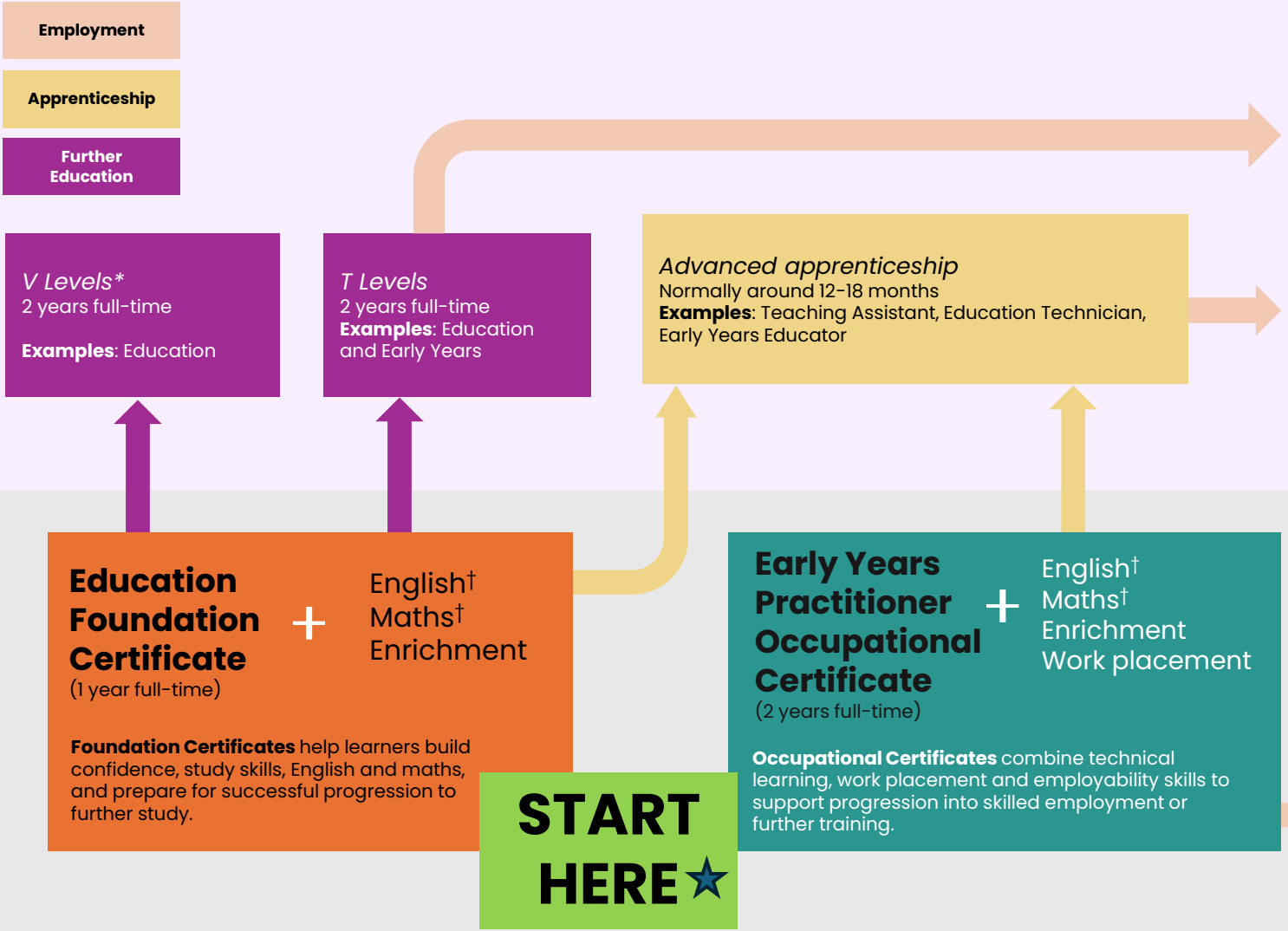
**OCCUPATIONAL
CERTIFICATES**

Education and Early Years Detailed Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)
If you want to go straight into work, there are **Nursery**, **Nanny** and **Childminder** opportunities. If you want to study further, there are opportunities at different levels, including **Youth Worker**, **Healthy Play Specialist** and **Teacher**. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience.

Level 3

Level 2



Example opportunities after level 3 study

- Teaching assistant**
Job titles include:
 - Teaching/Classroom assistant
 - Learning support assistant/worker
 - Specialist curriculum support
 - Support assistant
- Education technician**
Job titles include:
 - Junior/Assistant technician
 - Clinical simulation/skills technician
 - Simulation technicians
- Early years**
Job titles include:
 - Childminder assistant
 - Early years educator** (only if L3 EYE apprenticeship or another full and relevant qualification is taken)

Example opportunities after level 2 study

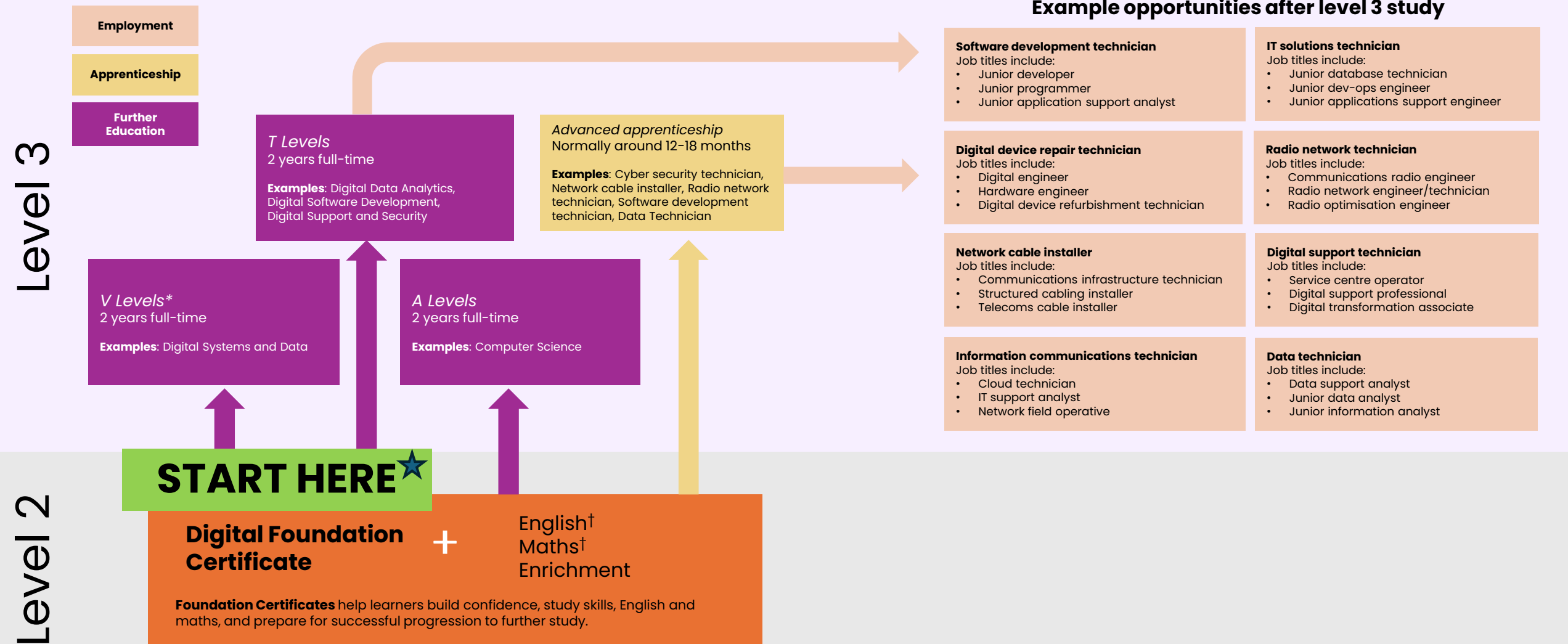
- Early years**
Job titles include:
 - Assistant childminder
 - Early years practitioner ** (only if a level 2 full and relevant qualification, such as the Occupational Certificate, is taken)
 - Nanny

★ Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.

*V Levels can be studied alongside A Levels and/or V Levels in other subjects
** The [Early Years Qualifications List](#) spreadsheet lists all full and relevant UK qualifications currently approved by DfE.
† If student needs to continue studying English or maths alongside the Foundation or Occupational Certificate.

Digital Detailed Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)
If you want to study further afterwards, there are many opportunities at different levels, including **Support Technician, Software Developer, Network Engineer** and **Programmer**. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience.



★ Please refer to the important information on slide 3 before viewing.

*V Levels can be studied alongside A Levels and/or V Levels in other subjects

† If student needs to continue studying English or maths alongside the Foundation Certificate.

Catering and Hospitality Detailed Progression Map

Possible career pathways (including longer-term opportunities)

If you want to work afterwards or study further, there are opportunities at different levels, including **Baker, Chef** and **Hospitality team** roles. The examples below show where the pathway could lead over time. Some roles require further qualifications, training and experience. Longer term opportunities with additional study or training at level 4 and above could lead to opportunities including **Executive chef, Catering manager, Hospitality manager** and **Event planner**.

Level 3

Example opportunities after level 3 study

Hospitality supervisor

- Job titles include:
- Bar supervisor
 - Concierge supervisor
 - Events supervisor
 - Food and beverage supervisor
 - Front office supervisor
 - Hospitality outlet supervisor
 - House keeping supervisor

Lead baker

- Job titles include:
- Artisan baker
 - Bakery team leader
 - New product development technician

Chef de partie

- Job titles include:
- Chef
 - Line chef
 - Section chef

Pastry chef

- Job titles include:
- Cake decorator
 - Cake designer

Senior production chef

- Job titles include:
- Head chef
 - Cook

Level 2

Example opportunities after level 2 study

Baker

Craft/Plant/Retail baker

Commis chef

Preparing food and basic cooking tasks in a kitchen under supervision

Production chef

Work in a team in kitchen environments

Example opportunities after level 2 study

Food and beverage team member

- Job titles include:
- Waiter/waitress
 - Bar staff

Hospitality accommodation team member

- Job titles include:
- Housekeepers
 - Customer service

Culinary Skills Occupational Certificate

(2 years full-time)

+ English[†]
Maths[†]
Enrichment

START HERE ★

Hospitality Occupational Certificate

(2 years full-time)

+ English[†]
Maths[†]
Enrichment

Occupational Certificates combine technical learning, work placement and employability skills to support progression into skilled employment or further training.

Employment

Apprenticeship

Further
Education

T Levels

2 years full-time

Examples: Hospitality and Catering
(introduction intended for 2029)