

Helping students choose their technical and vocational post-16 pathway



V LEVELS T-LEVELS

OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES

FOUNDATION CERTIFICATES

From September 2027, students will have access to new post-16 level 2 and level 3 qualifications. Choosing what to study after 16 is a significant decision and many young people can feel uncertain or overwhelmed. Alongside A Levels and T Levels, new qualifications will provide different routes for students with different strengths, interests and ambitions. This guide explains the key differences and who each option might suit. Here is your overview of what is available for students after their GCSEs.

Qualifications at a glance

Qualification	Level and size	Who is it for?	Key features	Intended progression
V LEVELS	Level 3 – the same size as one A Level. Duration: two years.	Students who want practical learning and the flexibility to combine subjects to keep options open .	Can be combined with other V Levels or A Levels; carries UCAS tariff points in line with A Levels. Normally 40% timetabled assessment and 60% other assessment, with written or practical tasks.	Related higher education or work-based training, such as an apprenticeship.
T-LEVELS	Level 3 – equivalent in size to three A Levels. Duration: two years.	Students who want to focus on a broad occupational area and want a substantial industry placement .	Includes an industry placement of at least 315 hours; carries UCAS points in line with A Levels. Assessed by core exams and an employer-set project, plus practical assessment of the occupational specialism.	Skilled employment, an apprenticeship or higher education.
FOUNDATION CERTIFICATES	Level 2. Duration: one year.	Students who need more time to build knowledge, skills and confidence before level 3 study.	Part of the Further Study Pathway, with English and/or maths where needed, enrichment, employability and pastoral support.	V/A Level, or a T Level, or an apprenticeship.
OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES	Level 2. Duration: two years.	Students who know the kind of work they want to move into.	Content aligned with employer-defined occupational standards, alongside English, maths, employability and personal development.	Related skilled employment or an apprenticeship.
 Apprenticeships	Level and duration varies.	Students who are ready to start work , earn a wage and train for a specific occupation.	Job-specific training in the workplace with part-time study.	Skilled employment, a higher-level apprenticeship, or further or higher education.



Quick reminder:

Level 2 qualifications help students prepare for progression to level 3 study, skilled employment or an apprenticeship.

Level 3 qualifications are broadly equivalent to A Level study.

Further information

T-LEVELS



- T Levels are level 3 technical qualifications that focus on a broad career area such as construction, engineering and manufacturing, health or digital.
- There are currently 20 T Levels available, with new T Levels planned for September 2028 in Sport and Social Care.

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T Levels
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OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES

- Occupational Certificates are a new level 2, classroom-based qualification within the Occupational Pathway.
- Subjects available from September 2027 are Early Years Practitioner, Culinary Skills, and Hospitality. More subjects will follow in future years.
- Occupational Certificates give students the opportunity to study the knowledge and skills employers say are needed for specific jobs.

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Find out more

Post-16 Pathways Implementation Plan

Post-16 Pathways Resource Pack

Progression Maps

T Levels

Apprenticeships



V LEVELS

- V Levels are new level 3 vocational qualifications.
- They develop practical skills that employers say they will need in the future, while giving students the flexibility to study different subjects and keep their options open.
- All V Levels use nationally set content and subjects available from September 2027 are Accounting and Finance, Digital Systems and Data and Education. More V Levels will follow between 2028-2030.

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FOUNDATION CERTIFICATES

- Foundation Certificates are a new level 2 qualification within the Further Study Pathway.
- Subjects available from September 2027 are Digital Systems and Data, and Education. More subjects will follow in future years.
- The Foundation Certificate does not have to be in the same subject as the student's intended level 3 qualification.

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