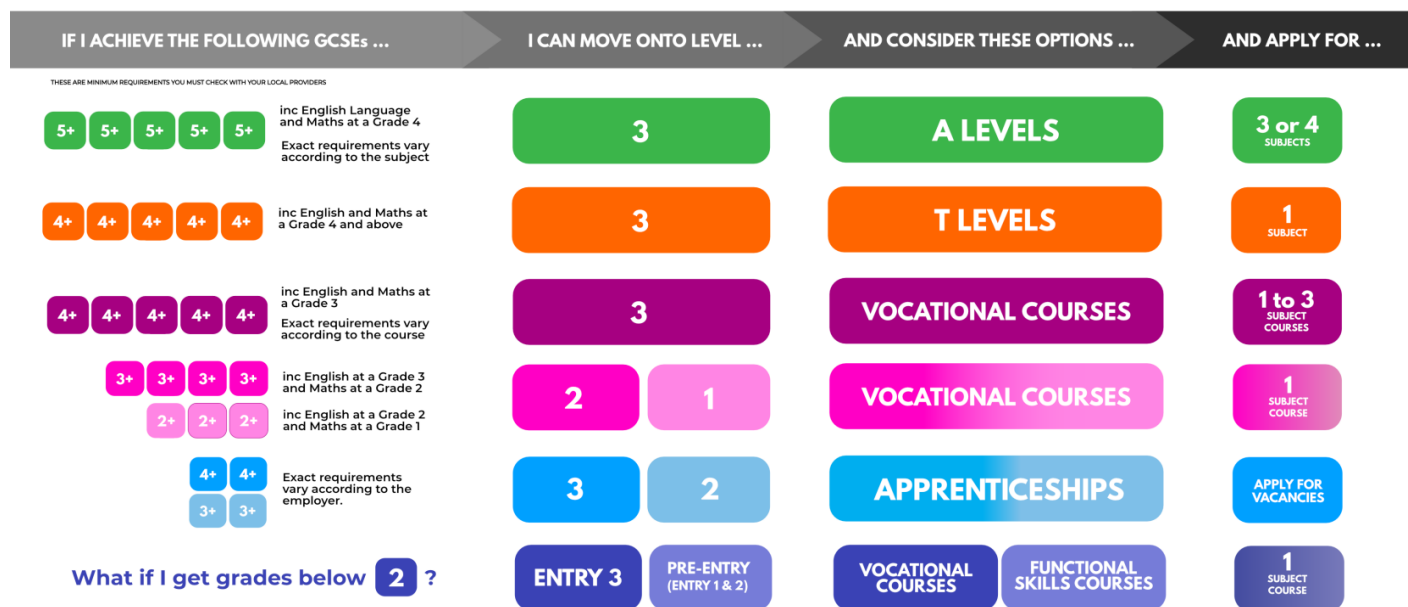


What options are available after GCSEs?

This guide will help you to support your child to plot their route and decide their next steps.



A-Levels

A-Levels (or Advanced Levels) are Level 3 subject-based qualifications. They take two years to complete. They are the most popular choice for students after their GCSEs.

Unlike vocational courses, A-Levels don't involve practical work placements. A-Levels are the perfect choice for students who enjoy studying for exams and developing theoretical knowledge. They allow students to specialise in the subjects they enjoy most or those relevant to their future career. If your child is planning to go to university, A-Levels are often essential to help meet the entry requirements for a chosen degree. For example, if your child would like to pursue a career in medicine, they MUST focus on subjects like biology, chemistry, and either maths or physics.

A-Levels are offered in sixth-form colleges or schools with sixth forms. A-Levels are a great fit if your child:

- enjoys academic learning
- is planning to go to university
- want to keep their options open
- has strong interests or career goals
- thrives in a focused learning environment, such as a school

T-levels

T-Levels offer students a vocational alternative to A-Levels. These two-year courses focus on practical, industry-specific learning. They cover a range of fields such as health, digital technology, or construction.

T-Levels combine work placements with academic study. Students spend 80% of their time in the classroom. The rest is spent on work placements in their chosen industry. Here, they will gain valuable work experience and see the practical application of what they have learned.

T-Levels are equivalent to three A-Levels and earn UCAS points, so they give flexibility and choice whether your child's goal is starting work immediately or continuing to university.

T-Levels are a great fit for your child if they:

- prefer practical learning
- have a clear career in mind
- want to gain workplace experience early
- are seeking options beyond academic studies

Vocational Technical Qualifications (VTQs)

Vocational Technical Qualifications (VTQs) include BTEC diplomas, Cambridge Nationals, and Cambridge Technicals. VTQs are industry-focused rather than subject-led. They cover a range of over 2000 subject options and can prepare students for specific careers in a wide range of sectors, from childcare to engineering.

VTQs, like T-Levels, are designed to equip students with practical skills and experience. They blend practical training with technical learning, making them ideal for anyone who prefers ongoing assessments rather than exam-based systems.

VTQs are widely recognised by employers and universities as alternatives to A-Levels. A range of levels of study are available - BTEC offers Level 1 to 7 qualifications, making them widely accessible. Discuss the best VTQ options for your child with school staff or careers advisers.

VTQs are a great fit for your child if they:

- prefer practical learning to academic study
- have a clear career or industry focus in mind
- prefer continuous assessment to exams
- are seeking flexible opportunities that leave them with options to enter work, further training, or higher education in the future

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are paid positions within a company that allow students to gain hands-on industry experience while working toward a qualification. Apprenticeships often last 1–3 years. During that time, students experience on-the-job learning in a real workplace setting. They will be guided by experienced professionals who'll help them to gain practical experience.

As an apprentice, students earn a salary and get holiday pay. They will spend around 80% of their time working, and the rest on study related to the role. With thousands of apprenticeships available, they can use this route to enter industries as diverse as beauty, construction, and web technology.

Apprenticeships offer widely recognised qualifications valued by employers across industries. That makes them a great pathway to immediate career entry within the company or the industry. They can also lead to higher education or advanced training.

Apprenticeships are a great fit for your child if they:

- want to start working and earning wages immediately
- prefer practical learning to traditional classroom study
- have a clear career goal, as they can start building expertise right away
- are seeking cost-effective education, avoiding traditional tuition fees

Supported Internships

Supported internships are unpaid work-based study programs designed for young people with learning difficulties or additional needs. They provide a supportive and tailored environment to help your child transition from education to the workplace.

In supported internships, most of their learning happens in the workplace. This will allow your child to gain practical experience and develop work skills. They will benefit from personalised support, guidance and advice from a qualified job coach to help them get the most from their experience.

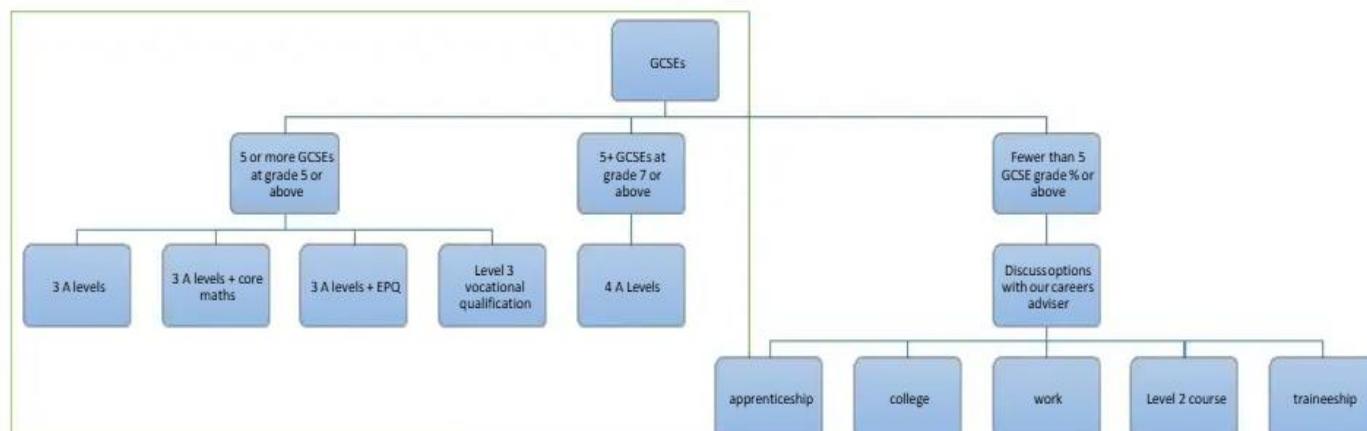
Alongside the work experience, students also follow a study programme to help them gain relevant qualifications. Students can then secure a paid job or go on to further training, such as apprenticeships.

Supported internships are a great fit for your child if:

- have learning difficulties or disabilities and have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- want a supportive environment with personalised guidance and coaching
- want to continue building confidence and independence
- feel ready to enter the workplace and gain real-world experience
- need flexible learning with a balance of workplace training and academic support to meet individual needs

See more at <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/preparing-for-adulthood/educationemployment/further-education/supported-internships/>

Frequently Asked Questions



What are the rules regarding education for 16-year-olds in the UK?

It is compulsory for young people to stay in education or training until the age of 18. However, that doesn't mean that your child needs to stay at the school they have attended until the age of 16. They can explore all the training and education options offered by local training providers.

See more at <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/career-choices-at-16>

Can you go straight to university after GCSEs?

No. Universities generally need students to have achieved higher qualifications such as A-levels to consider them for degree courses. Explore the options suited to you, such as A-levels, vocational qualifications such as NVQs, or apprenticeships. These will give them the knowledge and skills to succeed in a university course.

What can you do without any GCSEs?

Most colleges in the UK offer alternative pathways to success for students. So, if your child does not pass their GCSEs, don't panic. There may be *entry-level courses* available, which will provide a pathway into higher-level qualifications. Many vocational courses and apprenticeships are available to people without GCSEs. These course providers may consider other factors, such as relevant training, references, any work portfolio, and performance at interview. These vary between colleges, so contact individual institutions to see what they're looking for.

Can you go to Sixth Form without any GCSEs?

Sixth Forms generally focus on providing A-level courses and will have GCSE entry requirements to ensure students are suited to their courses. Students often embark on A-levels in subjects they have passed at GCSE, while at the same time preparing for resits in those GCSEs where they still need to achieve a pass grade. Find out the requirements for the sixth form your child wants to attend and speak to staff about the best options for them. If your child hasn't achieved any GCSE pass grades, they may be better suited to more practical, skills-based courses as their next step.

For more advice or support see Mrs Berry in the Library, or e-mail sophie.berry@gro.mmat.co.uk