

A LEVELS

The two most important criteria for choosing A levels are:

- What are you good at?
- What are you likely to enjoy?

If you are choosing a new subject, ensure that you find out as much as possible about it, speak to teachers, look at course content, and find out about what coursework and exams are involved.

Most university degree courses require certain A level grades and many specify A level subjects and GCSEs that you should have.

Think ahead to what you will be doing after A levels to help you choose the best subjects now. Choose subjects which will fit in with your career plans.

If you are not sure which career / degree course you wish to enter, try to choose a selection of subjects to allow you to keep options as open as possible.

Therefore when making your choices you should consider:

- The subjects that you are interested in.
- Your abilities, aptitudes and skills.
- How open you want to keep your career options.
- Which A level subjects are available at where you intend to study?

A levels at Urmston Grammar

Subjects on offer for 2020 entry (most students choose 3 subjects, exceptionally able students may choose 4 subjects): Art (cannot be taken with Photography), Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English Language, English Literature, French, Further Mathematics (essential to also opt for Mathematics), Geography, German, History, Mathematics, PE, Photography (cannot be taken with Art), Physics, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology.

To read further information about the subjects on offer including entry requirements look at: <http://www.urmstongrammar.org.uk/urmston-grammar-sixth-form-information/>

Entry requirements for 2020 entry: 2x7 & 3x6 (including 2x5 in English & Maths) at GCSE. Certain A level subjects may require a 6 or above at GCSE.

A levels at a different 6th Form or College (e.g. 6th forms: Ashton-on-Mersey, Sale Grammar, Stretford Grammar; Colleges: Eccles, Loreto, Manchester, Pendleton, Trafford, Xaverian)

Each 6th form and college will vary in terms of their A level subject offer (and vocational courses if they offer them too, e.g. BTECs) and offer additional subjects that are not on offer at Urmston Grammar. 6th forms and colleges may also be on different exam boards and therefore course content will differ. Research options on local 6th form and college websites.

Entry requirements will also vary at different 6th forms and colleges. Some may ask for 2x6 & 4x5 or 3x5 & 3x4 at GCSE for example, whereas others may ask for higher grades than at Urmston Grammar. Certain A level subjects may require a 6 or above at GCSE.

BTECs & Vocational Courses

Source: <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec.html>

Chosen by over 1 million learners every year, BTECs are career-based qualifications designed to give students the skills they need to move on to higher education (university or apprenticeships) or go straight into employment.

BTEC qualifications develop a range of practical knowledge and skills which help learners to prepare for, and progress in, their chosen career. Classroom style teaching combined with project work and practical, work-related activities help to develop students' behavioural skills, which can include teamwork, creative thinking and presentation skills.

Why study BTEC?

Many industry sectors have a set of National Occupational Standards that professionals must follow. The learning content of our BTECs is built around these National Occupational Standards, which is why BTECs are recognised as valuable qualifications by the Standard Setting Body (SSB) and/or Sector Skills Council (SSC) for each industry.

How can I study a BTEC qualification post-16?

BTECs can be studied alongside, or instead of, A levels in certain school 6th Forms and Further Education colleges.

What levels of qualifications are there?

BTECs come in different levels, from Entry Level (Foundation Learning) right through to professional qualifications at Level 7 (equivalent to postgraduate study).

Level 3 (equivalent to A levels) often requires 5x4 (including English & Maths) at GCSE.

What subjects can I study?

BTECs are available across a range of subjects, including animal management, art & design, building services design, business, childcare, computing, construction, engineering, graphics, health & social care, IT, media, music, performing arts, science (applied), sports, sport science, travel & tourism, uniformed services (& many more).

Vocational Courses (e.g. C&G, Diploma, NVQ) are available across a range of subjects, including accountancy, beauty therapy, bricklaying, catering, electrical installation, gas, hairdressing, joinery, media make-up, motor vehicle maintenance, plumbing (& many more).

How are BTECs graded?

BTECs are graded using a Pass (P), Merit (M), Distinction (D) and Distinction* (D*) scale. Depending on the size of your course, you may receive one, two or three grades. If the work you produce isn't of a high enough quality to pass with a P grade, you will be awarded a U, which means 'Unclassified'.

BTEC Nationals qualify for UCAS points for higher education.

How will I be assessed?

BTECs are made up of a number of units, which are usually assessed through assignments that are both set and marked by your teacher or course tutor. However, some BTECs contain externally marked tests (exams).

Assignments can include tests, research, essays, projects, investigations, artwork, fieldwork and experiments, and often link theory with practical exercises.

BTEC facts & statistics

In 2017, 1 in 4 students who got into university in the UK did so with a BTEC.

90% of BTEC students are employed full time after graduating (London Economics 2013).

T LEVELS

Sources:

<https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/students> - can add postcode to find providers offering T Levels

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels>

What are T Levels?

T Levels are a brand new 2-year qualification (equivalent to 3 A Levels at Level 3) that can be taken as an alternative to A Levels, other post-16 courses or an apprenticeship. The government has developed T Levels to deliver world class technical education. They have been designed in partnership with businesses and employers to learn the skills and knowledge to succeed in the workplace. More than 200 businesses have been involved, including Fujitsu and Skanska.

T Level courses will include a technical qualification, which will include core theory, concepts and skills for an industry area, and specialist skills and knowledge for an occupation or career, along with an industry placement with an employer and a minimum standard in Maths and English if not already achieved.

Why study T Levels?

T Levels involve more classroom study than apprenticeships, providing the opportunity to experience an industry and learn what a real career is like while continuing with studies. T Levels involve spending 80% of the time in the classroom and 20% on a 45 day industry placement with a local employer to get ready for work.

What subjects can I study?

The first 3 T Levels start in September 2020 at selected colleges and schools in England, with more coming in the following years. There will be 25 T Levels in total.

From September 2020: Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction; Digital Production, Design and Development; Education and Childcare.

From September 2021: Building Services Engineering for Construction; Digital Business Services; Digital Support and Services; Health; Healthcare Science; Onsite Construction; Science.

How are T Levels graded?

On passing a T Level a nationally recognised certificate will be provided showing the overall grade achieved as either Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*, with the same grading used for each occupational specialism, and a separate grade for the core component using A*-E. It will also include confirmation that the student has met the minimum requirements for Maths and English qualifications, completed the industry placement and met any additional mandatory requirements. It will also give details of what was learnt on the course to help progress into skilled employment or a higher apprenticeship.

T Levels will also be worth UCAS points. Distinction* is worth the same as 3 A Levels at A*, and will be recognised by universities and other education providers so that further study can continue in higher education/university.

A student's overall T Level grade will be worked out from the grades they achieved on the core component and the occupational specialisms.

Students who do not pass all elements of their T Level will get a T Level statement of achievement which will show the elements they have completed.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Sources:

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787717/Guide-to-Apprenticeships-260219-LR.pdf

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship gives you hands-on experience, a salary and the opportunity to gain qualifications while you work.

How do apprenticeships work?

To get your career started you usually need a combination of experience and qualifications. An apprenticeship gives you both by combining on the job training with study (usually one day a week) meaning you can earn while you learn. With some apprenticeships you can even get a degree.

It usually takes between one and six years to complete an apprenticeship depending on which level you take. Apprenticeships are available across a wide range of job roles and industries, and many high quality, prestigious companies offer them.

If you have no work experience on your CV, or you'd like to get a taster of a particular job or industry, you might like to consider work experience first.

What levels of apprenticeships are there?

Apprenticeships come in different levels, from Intermediate (Level 2) right through to Degree apprenticeships at Level 7 (equivalent to postgraduate study).

Advanced apprenticeships (aged 16+) at Level 3 (equivalent to 2 A levels) often requires 5x4 including English Language and Maths at GCSE as a minimum.

Higher apprenticeships (aged 18+) at Level 4+ (equivalent to Foundation degree and above) often requires A Levels/T Levels/BTEC/equivalent qualifications.

How much can you earn?

The minimum wage for apprentices aged 16-18 is £4.15 per hour (from 1st April 2020). The same applies if you're 19 and over and in the first year of your apprenticeship, after that you are entitled to the National Minimum Wage. However many employers pay more than this.

Pay is dependent on the industry, location and type of apprenticeship. Some higher apprenticeships can pay as much as £500 per week. The Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2016 estimated that Level 2 & 3 apprentices in the UK received £6.70 gross pay an hour.

What do employers look for?

Punctuality, reliability and having a real interest in the job, coupled with a willingness to learn. Many employers also value any voluntary work experience, especially if it relates to that particular role or sector.

Where can I search for vacancies?

There are many websites and apprenticeship training providers that advertise opportunities including:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

<https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>

WHAT NEXT IN YEAR 11?

- Presentation by Amy on Post-16 Options in September
- Group Work session with Amy on career planning websites for careers research in September (open day information will also be provided for all local 6th forms and colleges)
- One to one career guidance interviews with Amy in the Careers Room (back of the LRC) from September to December
- Career guidance reviews if necessary during December and the Spring Term (all students considering an apprenticeship at 16 and all students predicted on or below the UG entry requirements will be offered a review and support with completing application forms elsewhere if necessary)
- Lunch time drop in sessions with Amy still available every Wednesday

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR CAREER PLANNING

- eClips (Password: M41MAN): <http://www.eclips-online.co.uk/>
- Kudos (Licence Code: testinfo38): <https://kudos.cascaid.co.uk/#/>
- Apprenticeships: <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>
- Higher Ideas (Access Code: a8nhdczt): <http://www.careersoft.co.uk/> – ‘Sign in’ link
- UCAS (Higher Education): <https://www.ucas.com/>
- Informed Choices: <https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>
(A Level choices for degrees at competitive Russell Group Universities)

(Year 11 Group Work held in September will focus on exploring some of these websites in detail)

On the UG network Shared Documents (R:) Careers Folder you can find additional resources, including information on Post-16 Options

On the UG website (About Us, Careers, Useful Career Resources & Websites) you can find additional resources and websites

AMY MARSHALL (CAREERS ADVISER) AT URMSTON GRAMMAR

Available in school on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

Lunch time drop in every Wednesday in the Careers Room

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