

INTRODUCTION TO POST-16 OPTIONS

Examples of Local 6th Forms, Colleges & Apprenticeship Providers

Trafford

- Altrincham College: www.altrinchamcollege.com
- Altrincham Grammar School for Boys: www.agsb.co.uk
- Altrincham Grammar School for Girls: www.aggs.trafford.sch.uk
- Ashton on Mersey School: www.aomsixthform.co.uk
- Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College: www.bthcc.org.uk
- Loreto Grammar School: www.loretogrammar.co.uk
- Sale Grammar School: www.salegrammar.co.uk
- St Ambrose College: www.st-ambrosecollege.org.uk
- Stretford Grammar School: www.stretfordgrammar.com
- Trafford College Group (Altrincham & Stretford): www.trafford.ac.uk
- Urmston Grammar School: www.urmstongrammar.org.uk
- Wellington School: www.wellington-school.co.uk

Salford

- Salford City College Group (City Skills, Eccles Sixth Form College, FutureSkills@MediaCityUK, Pendleton Sixth Form College, Worsley College): www.salfordcc.ac.uk
- UTC@MediaCityUK: www.utcmidiacityuk.org.uk

Manchester

- Access Creative College: www.accesscreative.ac.uk
- Connell Co-op College: www.connell.ac.uk
- Loreto College: www.loreto.ac.uk
- The Manchester College (City, Nicholls, Wythenshawe, Openshaw & Harpurhey): www.tmc.ac.uk
- Xaverian College: www.xaverian.ac.uk

Cheshire, Greater Manchester & Lancashire

- Aquinas College (Stockport): <https://www.aquinas.ac.uk/>
- Cheadle College (Cheadle): <https://cheadle.tscg.ac.uk/>
- Myerscough College (Preston, Lancashire): <https://www.myerscough.ac.uk/>
- Priestley College (Warrington, Cheshire): <https://www.priestley.ac.uk/>
- Reaseheath College (Nantwich, Cheshire): www.reaseheath.ac.uk
- Sir John Deane's Sixth Form College (Northwich, Cheshire): www.sjd.ac.uk
- Winstanley College (Orrell, Wigan): <https://www.winstanley.ac.uk/>

Apprenticeship Providers (also check local colleges offering Apprenticeships)

- Estio: <https://www.estio.co.uk/>
- The Growth Company: <https://www.gceducationandskills.ac.uk/courses/>
- Total People: <https://www.totalpeople.co.uk/>

UNDERSTANDING POST-16 PATHWAYS

As you approach Year 11, you will begin thinking about what comes next after GCSEs. The good news is that there are several different routes available after age 16, and each one can lead to successful futures in University or Higher Education, Apprenticeships or Employment. The most important thing is choosing the pathway that best suits what you are interested in and how you learn.

You are currently studying GCSEs at Level 2. The goal is to pass your GCSEs, so that you can then progress onto the following Level 3 options.

One well-known option is **A Levels**, which are academic qualifications usually studied at a sixth form or college over two years. Students typically take three subjects and are assessed mainly through exams. A Levels are a common route for students who may wish to progress to university, although they can also lead to apprenticeships (advanced, higher or degree levels) or employment.

Students may also consider **V Levels**, and these are a new qualification due to start in 2027. They focus on vocational learning linked to particular industries and are equivalent to one A Level. These courses emphasise practical skills and applied knowledge, helping students develop experience that is valued by employers. They can lead to further study, apprenticeships or employment in a chosen sector.

Many colleges also offer **Vocational Qualifications** including **Applied General Qualifications**, such as BTEC courses. These combine coursework, projects and some exams, and can be equivalent to one, two or three A Levels depending on the size of the course. Students who complete these programmes often progress to university, apprenticeships or employment.

Another route is **T Levels**, which are technical qualifications developed with employers. These courses combine classroom learning with a substantial industry placement, giving students practical experience alongside their studies, and are equivalent to three A Levels. T Levels are designed to prepare students for technical careers, higher level apprenticeships, university or skilled employment.

Finally, some students choose **Apprenticeships**, where they work for an employer while completing training and gaining recognised qualifications.

It is important to remember that there is no single “best” route. Different pathways can lead to the same destinations. Thinking about your interests, strengths and preferred learning style will help you choose the option that is right for you.

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 School

The 22 subjects currently on offer for 2026 entry for current Year 11 students (most students choose 3 subjects, exceptionally able students may choose 4 subjects): Art, Craft & Design; Biology; Business; Chemistry; Computer Science; Drama & Theatre; Economics; English Language; English Literature; French; Further Mathematics; Geography; German; Government & Politics; History; Mathematics; Physical Education; Physics; Psychology; Religion, Philosophy & Ethics; Sociology; Textile Design.

To explore further information about the subjects on offer including entry requirements look at: <https://www.urmstongrammar.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1423&type=pdf>

Entry requirements for 2027 entry: 2x7 & 4x6 (including 2x5 in English Language & Maths) at GCSE. Certain A Level subjects may require a 6 or above at GCSE.

A Levels at a different 6th Form or College

Each 6th form and college will vary in terms of their A Level subject offer (and vocational qualifications, combining coursework/exams) 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/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.

V LEVELS, VOCATIONAL & APPLIED GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS (e.g. BTECs & CTECs) – LEVEL 3

FURTHER STUDY PATHWAY & OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAY – LEVEL 2

Sources:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2026/03/new-v-levels-and-post-16-qualifications-explained/>

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

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/cambridge-technicals/>

What levels of qualifications are there?

Qualifications 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?

Many V Levels, Vocational and Applied General Qualifications (at Level 3), and Further Study Pathway and Occupational Pathway (at Level 2) qualifications are available at different levels across a wide range of subjects, including: Animal Management; Art & Design; Aviation Operations; Beauty Therapy; Brickwork; Business; Carpentry & Joinery; Catering; Childcare; Computing; Construction; Criminology; Electrical Installation; Engineering; Equine Studies; Fashion & Textiles; Forensic Science; Game Design; Graphic Design; Hairdressing; Health & Social Care; IT; Journalism; Media; Media Make-Up; Motor Vehicle; Music; Painting & Decorating; Performing Arts; Photography; Plumbing; Science; Sport; Technical Theatre Production; Travel & Transport; Uniformed Protective Services (& many more).

V LEVELS (New qualifications)

What are V Levels?

V Levels will be new Level 3 qualifications that offer a vocational pathway for students who want to explore different sectors before deciding where to specialise. This new pathway will replace the wide range of qualifications that are not A Levels or T Levels and enable students to study a range of areas.

Each V Level will be a nationally recognised 2-year qualification taught in schools and colleges and equivalent in size to one A Level. This means students will be able to combine multiple V Levels with A Levels and other qualifications such as Level 2 English and Maths, mixing and matching vocational and academic routes, and thereby creating a programme that reflects their interests and career ambitions. V Level content will be based on the skills you need for real jobs, with the same framework used for T Levels and Apprenticeships.

What V Levels can I study?

The first three V Levels will be available from September 2027 in: Digital; Education and Early Years; Finance and Accounting. More subjects will follow over time (15 subjects from September 2028-2030 onwards).

How will I be assessed?

Most of the assessment will be non-exam and will be through practical tasks. V Levels will attract UCAS points, providing a pathway to further study, apprenticeships or employment.

APPLIED GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS (e.g. BTECs & CTECs)

What are Applied General Qualifications?

Applied General Qualifications at Level 3, including BTECs and CTECs, can be studied instead of, or alongside A Levels (if worth 1 or 2 A Levels), in certain school 6th forms and

colleges.

BTEC qualifications 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. BTECs 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.

Cambridge Technicals (CTECs) are vocational qualifications designed with the workplace in mind and provide a high-quality alternative option to A Levels.

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'. BTECs qualify for UCAS points for higher education. 23% of students who went to university in 2018 had a BTEC.

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 newer 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.

FURTHER STUDY PATHWAY (New qualifications)

Level 2 one-year programmes that are classroom-based options taught in schools and colleges. These help students bridge the gap to higher level study.

Available for 16-19 year olds who want to and are capable of progressing to further study at Level 3 (T Levels/A Levels or V Levels) but who may need more time to prepare, building confidence and strengthening their skills first.

These include a Foundation Certificate, a vocational qualification. Content includes English and/or Maths, enrichment activities and exposure to Level 3 teaching.

Available from September 2027 in: Education and Early Years; Digital, including IT and tech.

OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAY (New qualifications)

Level 2, two-year employment focused programmes that are classroom-based options taught in colleges and other training providers. These give students training designed around real jobs and industries, helping them become work-ready and confident about starting in work.

Available for 16-19 year olds who want to develop the skills and experience needed to move straight into a skilled job or apprenticeship after Level 2 and need to develop their technical knowledge and skills.

These include an Occupational Certificate, a technical qualification. Content includes English and/or Maths, enrichment activities, core content and occupation-specific learning.

Available from September 2027 in: Catering and Hospitality; Education and Early Years.

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 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.

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 (or 315 hours) minimum industry placement with a local employer to get ready for work.

What subjects can I study?

T Levels are available at selected colleges and schools in England. From Sept 2020: Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction; Digital Software Development; Education and Early Years. Sept 2021: Building Services Engineering for Construction; Digital Data Analytics; Digital Support and Security; Health; Science. Sept 2022: Accounting; Design and Development for Engineering and Manufacturing; Engineering, Manufacturing, Processing and Control; Finance; Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing; Management and Administration. Sept 2023: Agriculture, Land Management and Production; Legal Services. Sept 2024: Animal Care and Management; Craft and Design; Media, Broadcast and Production. Sept 2025: Marketing. T Levels will be expanded into additional subjects, including Sports, Fitness and Exercise Science and Care Services.

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. 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.

A study found that following completion of their T Level in 2024, 91% progressed to education, employment or training: <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/updates/new-data-provides-further-evidence-that-t-levels-offer-a-range-of-destinations/> (April 2026).

APPRENTICESHIPS (& Supported Internships)

Sources:

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

<https://www.gov.uk/become-apprentice>

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 would 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 and what is available?

Apprenticeships come in different levels, from Foundation & Intermediate (Level 2) right through to Degree apprenticeships at Level 7 (equivalent to Master's 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.

You can 'Search apprenticeship standards' on offer on the Skills England website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-england>

How much can you earn?

The minimum wage for apprentices aged 16-18 is £8.00 per hour (from 1st April 2026). The same applies if aged 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 industry, location and type of apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2018/19 estimated L2 & L3 apprentices received £6.96/hour (when £3.90 minimum).

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>

Supported Internships (as a possible alternative option for students with an EHCP)

Visit: <https://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/training-choice/supported-internship-with-an-ehc>

WHAT NEXT IN YEAR 11?

- Presentation by Amy on Post-16 Options in September.
- Open day information will be provided for all local 6th forms and colleges by Amy in September.
- Group Work session on career planning websites for careers research.
- One to one careers guidance meetings with Amy in the Careers Office (back of the LRC) from September to November.
- Careers guidance reviews if necessary, during December and the Spring Term (all students considering an apprenticeship at 16 and all students predicted just above, on, or below the UGS 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

Careers

Unifrog:	https://www.unifrog.org/sign-in
Prospects:	https://www.prospects.ac.uk/
National Careers Service:	https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/

Apprenticeships

Skills England:	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-england
Apprenticeships:	https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/
Find an Apprenticeship:	https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

University

UCAS:	https://www.ucas.com/
Discover Uni:	https://discoveruni.gov.uk/
Whatuni:	https://www.whatuni.com/
Informed Choices:	https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/

(A Level choices for degrees at competitive Russell Group Universities)

On the UGS network Student SharePoint in the Careers folder you can find additional resources, including information on Post-16 Options.

On the UGS website (About Us, Careers) you can find additional resources and websites:

[Urmston Grammar School - Useful Careers Resources & Websites](#)

AMY MARSHALL (CAREERS ADVISER) AT URMSTON GRAMMAR

Available in school on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

Lunch time drop in every Wednesday 1:15pm-2:00pm in the Careers Room.

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