

Qualifications explained

Whatever option you choose you will work towards accredited qualifications that are recognised across the country. There are lots of different qualifications at different levels depending on how challenging they are. It's important to know the facts about these qualifications as it may help you decide which option to choose. The table below gives you information about each qualification.

Qualification	Level	Description	How are they achieved	Entry requirements
AS and A Levels	Level 3	Academic qualifications that are available in a range of subjects. A popular route to university and take two years to complete.	Exams or coursework, or a combination of both.	Usually 5 GCSEs at grade C and above including English and maths. Some A levels may require you to have a certain grade at GCSE in the same or similar subject that you are applying for.
Vocationally-related qualifications (VRQs)	Entry level to level 3	Vocational qualifications such as BTECs, awards, certificates and diplomas. Available in a range of subjects, designed to give you the skills employers are looking for in various vocational areas.	Assignments, projects and sometimes tests.	Depends on the level studied, usually 4 or 5 GCSEs at grade C and above for level 3, GCSEs at grade D for level 2 or GCSEs at grades E to F for level 1.
National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)	Level 1 to level 3	Usually completed through an Apprenticeship but can be studied through full-time or part-time learning.	Work observations, written work and, sometimes tests	You may have to be employed in a job which is related to the NVQ (especially if you are doing an Apprenticeship). GCSEs may also be required.
GCSEs	Level 1 to level 2	If needed, you can retake your GCSEs alongside other qualifications in a range of subjects, usually maths, English or science.	Exams or coursework, or a combination of both.	Most providers want you to have a grade D in the subject you are retaking.
Functional Skills	Level 1 to level 3	Usually completed through an Apprenticeship or Foundation learning programme. Functional skills are available in English, Maths and ICT. They are designed to help you apply these skills to real life or work situations.	Exams or coursework, or a combination of both.	The level you study will depend on the level of Apprenticeship programme or Foundation learning programme you complete and your GCSE grades for English, Maths or ICT.

Remember that entry requirements can vary between courses and learning providers, always check before you apply.