

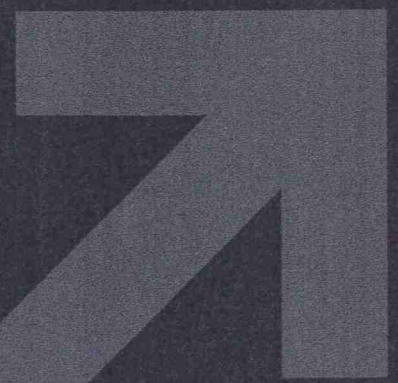
Understanding Post 16 Options

A guide for learners and
their parents/carers



Schools Partnership

schoolspartnership@stcg.ac.uk



At recent Careers and Open Events, students and their families tell us it can be hard to understand the range of different learning opportunities after GCSEs. This short guide was produced by South Thames Colleges Group Schools Partnership Team to help explain both post 16 and post 18 options and the pathways these choices might lead to.



OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION LEVELS

LEVEL	QUALIFICATION/EDUCATIONAL ROUTE			
	Academic Route		Vocational Route	Applied/Work Route
8	Doctorate (PhD)		NVQ 8	
7	Masters Degree (MA)		Degree Apprenticeship NVQ 5, 6, 7	
6	Bachelors Degree (BA or BSc)			
5	Foundation Degree		Higher National Diploma (HND)	
4			Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher Apprenticeship NVQ 4
3	A Levels grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels BTEC Diploma BTEC Certificate	Advanced Apprenticeship NVQ 3
2	GCSE grades 4-9 (C-A*)		BTEC First Diploma	Intermediate Apprenticeship NVQ 2
1	GCSE grades 1-3 (D-U)		Foundation Diploma / entry level qualifications	Traineeship NVQ 1

POST 16 PATHWAYS

A Levels: Most common progression route for students after GCSE exams with 68% of students choosing three A Level options. Usually studied at school or sixth form college for two years. Subject content is academic, classroom-based learning and assessed by exams at the end of the study period.

Well suited to students who enjoy book-based learning, are comfortable in their familiar school environment and/or require A Levels for their University courses eg. Medicine.

BTECs: One subject area studied at college for two years eg Health and Social Care, Engineering, National Extended BTEC Diploma at Level 3 is equivalent to three A Levels and carries equivalent UCAS points for University or learners can progress to higher apprenticeships or employment. Subject content is vocational and practical based learning including college teaching and local work experience. Instead of exams, learners are assessed through project-based tasks and practical unit assessments.

Some colleges now offer a blended pathway combining a BTEC option plus related A Level eg Engineering BTEC and Maths A Level.

Well suited to students who enjoy hands on learning, coursework and a mature, work focused environment.

T Levels: (Recent introduction and phased roll out of subjects planned): one subject area studied at college (some school sixth forms) for two years. Subject content includes core theory and specialist skills taught at college and a 45 day relevant industry placement, overseen by the college. One T Level is equivalent to three A Levels and carries equivalent UCAS points for University (currently not accepted for Russell Group Universities) or learners can progress to higher apprenticeships or employment.

Well suited to academically minded students who are work focused and enjoy some practical learning of specialized skills.

Apprenticeships: One work based subject studied for a minimum of 12 months within a specific job sector or profession. An advanced apprenticeship is equivalent to two A Levels. Learners receive a salary and are under the same terms and conditions as other employees but study the technical course content and gain their qualification at college, typically one or two days per week.

Well suited to students passionate about and ready for work in a specific area eg. catering, motor vehicle engineering.

LEVEL 3 APPRENTICESHIP AT CARSHALTON COLLEGE: LUKE WHEELER



Luke started at the College on a Full Time Plumbing Level 2 course. He is now studying an Apprenticeship Level 3.

"I wanted to do a more practical course at College rather than traditional A Levels. I chose Plumbing as it

seemed the most challenging. The College helped me secure my work placement with Engie, which I started in September.

"I spend four days a week at work which is really interesting and I enjoy the experience I am gaining on a daily basis. Currently, I am working on projects with TFL so get to travel to various sites around London. The locations are mainly commercial sites, which means I am learning to communicate with all different types of people.

"The day I spend at College provides additional learning opportunities where we examine different scenarios and practical challenges. I receive a lot of support from my tutor who has decades of knowledge and industry experience to share.

"I hope to continue working with Engie after completing my Apprenticeship and becoming a fully qualified Gas Engineer."



For a listing of local further education courses: stcg.ac.uk/courses

For more information about T levels: tlevels.gov.uk

For a list of local Apprenticeships: stcg.ac.uk/apprenticeships

POST 18 PATHWAYS

Undergraduate Degree: One subject (or more than one subject studied at the same time at the same level) studied usually at University of choice for three years. Most courses have specific entry requirements in the form of UCAS points derived from A Levels/ BTECs or equivalent. Course tuition fees are £9,250 on average for each year that does not include accommodation or living costs. Student loans to cover tuition costs and — depending on family income — a maintenance loan, are available through Student Finance England.

Well suited to students who want to study a particular subject area and engage with the University experience that can include living on campus.

Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND):

These practical based qualifications can be studied at FE or HE colleges. Tuition fees vary from £5-7,000 and loans are available through Student Finance England. A one year HNC is equivalent to completing the first year at University, a one year HND is comparable to the second year at University. Both qualifications can provide access to higher qualifications including a route into University.

Well suited to students who want to continue studying their chosen area and/ or want a cheaper, more local option often with smaller class sizes.

Foundation Qualification: A one year full time course studied at college or university in preparation for an Undergraduate course eg Foundation Diploma in Art, Design and Media Practice allows students to try a range of techniques before committing to a full degree course. These are free to students under 19 years at the start of their course, financial support as above is available to those over 19 years of age.

Well suited to students who need more personalized learning and experience in preparation for an undergraduate course.

Degree Apprenticeship: These competitive, job-specific courses allow students to be in paid employment whilst studying at a linked university for a minimum of three years eg The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship at Kingston College combines academic study with 'on the job learning' as you work towards a fully funded BA (Hons) Management and Business degree validated by Kingston University.

Well suited to students with a range of employability skills who want to "earn while they learn".

LEVEL 4 HNC PERFORMING ARTS (ACTING) AT KINGSTON COLLEGE: AMELIA KIRK



"Kingston College has been a great place to study as we have all sorts of facilities at our fingertips, like the Arthur Cotterill Theatre...My aim is to go to drama school and I think Kingston College is a nice in-between way of getting me

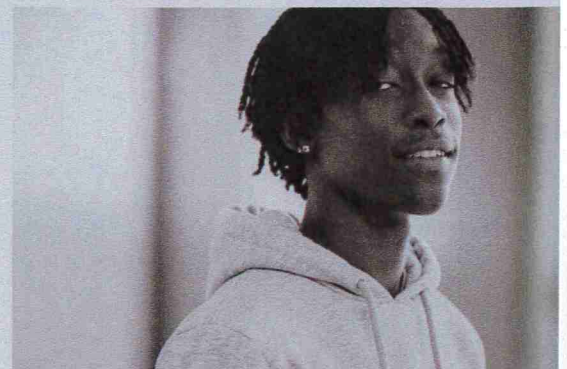
there as I am getting a massive amount of support from my teachers... the course keeps me engaged and allows me to practice the thing I love on a regular basis".

PEARSON BTEC LEVEL 5 HND ART & DESIGN (GRAPHIC DESIGN) AT SOUTH THAMES COLLEGE: TIM CHAPMAN



"The courses here are great, especially Art & Design, it gave me the opportunity to explore a few different paths... I wouldn't have considered a career in Art & Design as an option until I studied it. I gained a real interest

in programming and being technical in art rather than just photography or illustration, if it wasn't for being exposed to different types of art & design that wouldn't have come up. My advice is to be open to what the course throws at you because you are not going to know what is going to spark interest until you actually try it out and give it your all."



To learn about going to University: [ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)

For information on local undergraduate courses: [stcg.ac.uk/undergraduate](https://www.stcg.ac.uk/undergraduate)

For more information on student loans: [gov.uk/student-finance](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

To explore opportunities for those not going to University: [notgoingtouni.co.uk](https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)