

Parent/carer and student guide to post 16 pathways, qualifications and careers information

Your young person is now in Year 11 and preparing for their GCSEs. Although these are changing times, now is the time to prepare for post 16 choices if you have not started already.

We hope that this brief guide will help you and your young person.

Applications

Current Year 11 students will be applying for courses in colleges.

Each college have their own deadlines for applications, so be sure to find out when these are by visiting their website, social media page or open event.

A personal statement will be required for a college application. All year 11's will have time in school to start their personal statements. Help is also available on the school careers page

<http://www.msj.bolton.sch.uk/page/?title=Careers&pid=45>

Open Days

From October, colleges hold open days aimed at Year 11 students, to show what courses they have available and to allow students and parents/carers a chance to look around.

- Covid-19: open days will hopefully be in person this year. You may need to register with the college to attend as numbers may be restricted.
- Open day details can be found via the school website
<http://www.msj.bolton.sch.uk/page/?title=College+Events&pid=103>
- Aim to attend as many open days as possible at all the colleges you are interested in.

Social Media

It is advisable to explore the social media content of colleges on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, all information can also be found on the school's careers twitter account @msjcareers and the main school twitter account, @msjbolton as well as the careers section on the school website:

<http://www.msj.bolton.sch.uk/page/?title=Careers&pid=45>

Research

It is important to do your research; there are a few important questions you can ask:

- Check the facilities and ask what equipment you may need to purchase (if looking to take a specialist course such as mechanics or catering) and whether the college can help with the cost of these.
- It is advisable to ask what the progression rate is to what you wish to do. E.g. "If studying carpentry how many students go on to become carpenters afterwards?"

- You can also ask how many students leave once starting their studies, as well as how much support is available.
- You will also need to consider how far you may have to travel, and what bus routes can you take.

Interviews

Colleges start interviewing students from January onwards, with some running a first-come, first-served process. When they are full, some start a 'waiting list'. It is for this reason that an early application is vital once your young person knows what they wish to study.

Note: there are not always enough places on every course for every student. Some courses are more popular than others, so getting in early can be vital.

The level of course they can apply for will vary, depending on the grades they are predicted by their teachers.

Courses at post 16 vary significantly in depth and breadth, with options available for students with complex SEND requirements, for those with no qualifications (or very few), through to courses for students who are predicted to gain grades 6 or higher at GCSE.

Some courses are very practical and others more exam based.

- Make sure you take a pathway which suits your needs and how you like to learn, whether exams, coursework, vocational or creative.

Pathways

All students must remain in full time education or training until they are 18 and must continue to study Mathematics and English unless they have achieved GCSE grade 4.

The Government defines full time education and training as

- full time study in a school, college or training provider
- an apprenticeship or traineeship
- full time work or volunteering [20 hours or more] combined with part time accredited study

The pathways open to students are as follows:

- **A Levels**

Academic based qualifications studied in three/four subjects and examined at the end of a two-year course based on grades A*-E. They are offered by Further Education colleges and school sixth forms.

A levels can lead to university degrees or higher level apprenticeships offered by employers.

Each college has different entry requirements to allow students to study A levels.

These can be found in their prospectuses or on their web pages. Most will require at least five GCSEs grades 4-9 including Mathematics and English.

- **BTEC-British and Technology Education Council-qualifications**

BTECs are qualifications linked to an occupational area, for example Construction, Catering, Health and Social Care, or Travel and Tourism. You will choose to study 1 BTEC for the time you are in college.

Assessment is continual, involving practical study and coursework rather than based on final examinations.

BTEC level 3 is the equivalent to 3 A level's and can lead to university or apprenticeship/employment.

- **Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are a job with training that results in gaining a qualification in the relevant field of work.

You will gain hands-on experience in a real job, earn a salary, and get training for a specific job role.

This would suit someone who knows exactly which field of work they want to work in.

You can apply direct to employers who advertise apprenticeship vacancies or through a training provider such as Alliance Learning <https://alliancelearning.com/>

- **T levels**

T Levels are fairly new and are an alternative to A levels, BTEC's and apprenticeships.

They are the equivalent to 3 A levels, and a T Level focuses on vocational skills and can help students into skilled employment, higher study or higher level apprenticeships. Each T Level includes an in-depth industry placement that lasts at least 45 days.

More information on T levels can be found here: <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/>

FAQ's

- **How many colleges can we apply to?**

Young people can apply to as many colleges as they like, and can keep all of their offers of places open until the day they enrol, (they do not have to make their final choice until they have received their GCSE results).

- **Back-ups?**

It is advisable that students apply to more than one place for several reasons. If they don't achieve the grades they need for their first choice, it is useful for them to have a second option with lower entry criteria. Or they may simply change their mind after applying.

- **SEND**

If your son or daughter has SEND requirements (with or without an EHCP) it is advisable to discuss supported transitions with our SENCO in school and the college you are applying to.

- **GCSE Results Day**

Results day in August 2022 will come round very quickly! Once students have received their results, its decision time, and they can enrol at their chosen college on their chosen course, sometimes on the same day as getting their results.

Summary

All of this may feel a little daunting, but our careers adviser in school as well the [National Careers Service helpline for teenagers](#) are here to support you if you have any questions or queries.