

OPTIONS AFTER YEAR-11 A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

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This guide was developed by Suffolk County Council Skills Team September 2023. For more information contact skills@suffolk.gov.uk

What are the options?

Staying in “learning” after 16, gaining qualifications and skills is considered essential if young people are to progress and have the best chance of making the most of the opportunities available to them. It is considered so important that all young people in England are required to stay in learning.

It’s important to remember that “learning” can take place in school, college or work with training – so there should be a route to suit everyone.

Whatever route they choose, it’s important to aim for a Level 2 qualification in Maths and English. This could be a GCSE or a Functional Skills qualification. This means that young people must continue to study these subjects if they don’t achieve a GCSE at Grade 4 or above.

How the new grades compare with the old ones

Old grades	New grades
A*	9
A	8
B	7
C	6
D	5 – Strong Pass 4 – Standard Pass
E	3
F	2
G	1
U	U

GCSEs

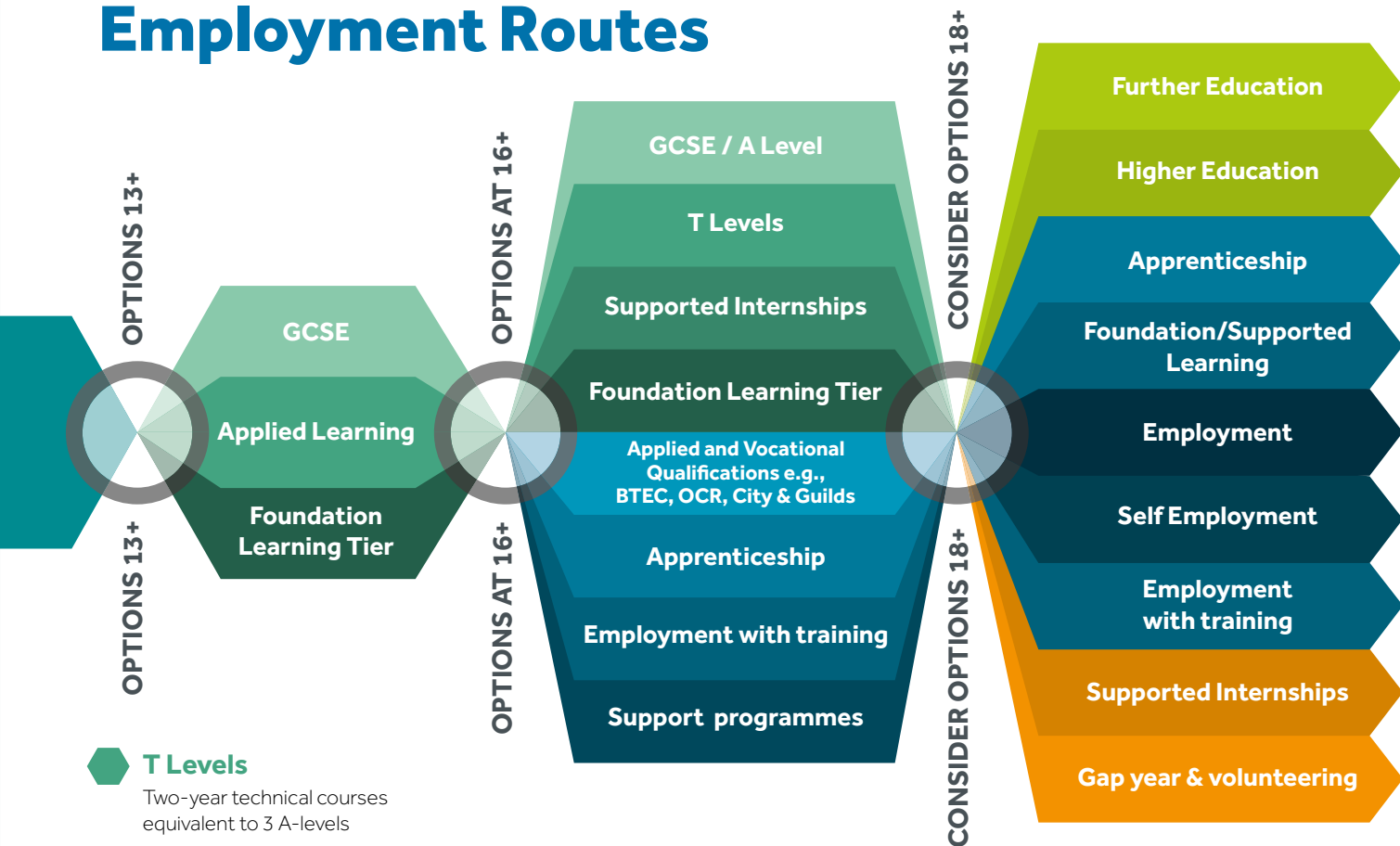
Grading for GCSEs changed a few years ago. All GCSEs are now graded 9-1.

Learning Routes and Qualifications

GCSEs or other qualifications needed	Types of qualifications to take next	How long will it usually take?
At least 4 GCSEs at grade 4 and above or equivalent though some will ask for higher grades.	Level 3 AS/A Level, Applied and vocational L3 courses (e.g. BTEC), T-Levels, Apprenticeships	2 years
At least 4 GCSEs at grade 3 or equivalent	Level 2 Applied and vocational Level 2 courses, Apprenticeships	1 year
Some GCSEs at grade 1 or 2 or equivalent	Level 1 Vocational Level 1 courses	1-2 years
No GCSE grades	Entry Level Foundation/Supported Learning	1-3 years

13-19+ Learning and Employment Routes

Adapted from an original image from The CDI



T Levels

Two-year technical courses equivalent to 3 A-levels

Foundation Learning

Foundation learning courses combine practical and vocational experiences with maths, English and ICT for learners not ready for a full Level 2 course. It may include supported work based learning or volunteering, or developing skills for independent living and work.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships offer training for a job while working with an employer, alongside study for an associated qualification. You get paid while working.

Support programmes

Diverse programmes to support young people to have confidence and motivation to get back into learning or training. These can last from 6 weeks to 9 months.

Applied and Vocational

Qualifications with an emphasis on developing practical skills for employment which may allow access to Higher Education if taken at Level 3.

Supported Internships

For young people aged 16 - 24 with learning difficulties or learning disabilities, who want to get a job and need extra support to do this. (This would normally be through an EHCP).

Their Future Plan

By the end of Year 11 your child/ young person will need to make some decisions about their next steps after Year 11.

They should start thinking about this earlier. Some young people have a plan from very early on, others will start to think about their career choices in Year 9 or 10. Some will still be thinking about it right up to the last day of Year 11. They often change their mind during the year – or can't decide between two or more options - and often don't have a clue!

All schools should have a specialist careers adviser who will be able to help them talk through their concerns, the options available and support them to make a plan. Encourage them to talk to the school's careers adviser as soon as possible. Their name should be on the school website.

- ▶ Encourage your child/young person **to see the school's career adviser** and ask tutors and teachers for more information or advice.
- ▶ **Explore the range of options** in employment, training, sixth forms and further education colleges.
- ▶ **Consider pathways** that fit around their skills, interests and predicted grades.
- ▶ **Weigh up all the pros and cons** of different options.
- ▶ Visit these websites to help with your **research**: <https://thesource.me.uk/yourfuture/choicesat16/>
- ▶ **Check out school, college and training provider websites** for more information and go to college and sixth form open days. Most have virtual tours on their websites.

Applying for more than one course or place can be a good idea to keep their options open.

It's important to remind them that whilst these decisions are important, they don't need to have the rest of their lives mapped out. Just encourage them to find something they enjoy so that they carry on learning and developing skills they will need for the future.

- ▶ Contact colleges/sixth forms if your child/young person is likely to need **additional support**. If they have an EHCP (Education, Health Care Plan), they should be getting support from school through a Moving into Adulthood / Preparing for Adulthood Plan. For more information look at the **Post 16 Transition Guide**.

September - December

- ▶ **There are deadlines for making applications** – ensure that your child/young person is aware of these dates; don't let them leave everything until the last minute!
- ▶ Remember that some courses are very popular so avoid disappointment by **submitting an early application**.
- ▶ **College and sixth form interviews begin**. Some of these may be online.

January - March

- ▶ **Application forms** for college or 6th Form ideally need to be completed by the end of January. Offers for a place are likely to be “conditional” – depending on exam results.
- ▶ If your child/young person is looking for work with training or apprenticeships, they need to **start contacting training providers and employers**; they might also need a back-up plan such as a full-time college course.
- ▶ **For a list of training providers** ask the school careers adviser .

April - June

- ▶ **Exams** start in May: some schools have study leave.
- ▶ **Check the costs** of books, field trips, uniforms and equipment for post 16 options. Most courses will be free for 16-19 year olds.
- ▶ Discuss with student advisers **if there are any bursaries** for travel or equipment.
- ▶ Applications for transport should be made between 1st March and 31st May **www.suffolkonboard.com/optin**. Though you might find using other subsidised methods cheaper e.g. Endeavour Card.
- ▶ Young people need to continue applying for jobs and apprenticeships, make sure they have an **up-to-date CV** ready. Use the **icanbea CV Builder** to create a quick CV.
- ▶ If looking for training, register with the **Apprenticeship service** and **keep an eye on vacancies**. They could also register with **Apprenticeships Suffolk** for additional support.
- ▶ **National Insurance numbers** should have been issued by now but if not call **0300 2003500** or **[apply online](#)**.

July - August

- ▶ Your child/young person **needs to enrol at college** if they have applied for a course starting in September.
- ▶ Colleges and Sixth forms may have **induction sessions** after exam results.
- ▶ **Options might need to be considered** once they have received exam results. School careers advisers and staff at Sixth forms, colleges, training providers can all give help and advice. There is nearly always an alternative course on offer.
- ▶ If your child/young person is looking for Apprenticeships, they need to **update their CV with exam results**.
- ▶ **Child benefit** should still be payable if your teenager is continuing in full time education, for more information visit **www.gov.uk/child-benefit** or call **0300 200 3100**.

Information & advice

Speak to careers teachers or advisers or tutors in school or college or contact the National Careers Service

Useful websites

<https://nationalcareersservice.gov.uk> or telephone them on **0800 100 900**.

- ▶ Higher Education courses: www.ucas.com
- ▶ Suffolk's website for young people: www.thesource.me.uk
- ▶ Help with transport: www.thesource.me.uk/my-transport/
- ▶ Create a quick CV using the icanbea CV Wizard: www.icanbea.org
- ▶ Information about the types of jobs available in Suffolk and Norfolk: www.icanbea.org

For young people with an EHCP, there should be lots of help from school, college and other agencies. This should all form part of their Moving Into Adulthood /Preparing for Adulthood plan that should have begun in Year 10. For more information contact the school's SENCo or look at the information in [Suffolk's Post 16 Transition Guide](#).

Help and Support from Suffolk County Council

Suffolk County Council's Youth Support Services are available for young people aged 16-18, who have not found the right option by the time they leave school or have dropped out in Year 12 or 13.

You can contact your local office by looking here -

<https://www.thesource.me.uk/home/where-to-get-help-and-support-in-suffolk>

Keeping in touch: Suffolk County Council (SCC) has a duty to follow up all young people in Suffolk to find out what education, employment or training they are in. We are required to collect information about what young people do for the two years after Year 11 and to offer them support if they are not in education, employment or training. So, we might contact you during this time by email, phone call, letter or text or ask you to give us information about where your child/young person is studying or working.

SCC may share basic information about young people with local organisations that can help with their future (e.g., a college or training provider with courses that might interest them). We are careful about what we share and only authorised people will access the information when they need it to do their jobs. The only time we will share information without your permission is if the law requires us to do so.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/privacy-notice>

Jobs for the future

Predicting what kinds of work will be available in the future is very hard. However, research does tell us that workers will need higher skills and qualifications than ever before. Jobs using Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths will be important. People will also need to be adaptable, creative and able to work in teams, so Arts subjects are important too. The following sectors have been identified as areas where jobs are predicted to grow in East Anglia.

[For more information about these areas of work, or visit **www.icanbea.org**.](http://www.icanbea.org)



Questions to ask....

Questions to ask at open events with Post 16 Providers (Sixth Forms, Sixth Form colleges, Further Education colleges or training providers).

Application

- ▶ What qualifications or GCSE grades do they need? Do they need grades in specific subjects?
- ▶ What happens if they don't get the right grades?
- ▶ What happens if not enough people apply for the course?
- ▶ Will they be invited to an interview?
- ▶ How long will they have to wait to hear if they have a place?

Course Content

- ▶ What is the balance between taught lessons and independent study?
- ▶ How much will be taught online or face to face?
- ▶ What is the usual class size?
- ▶ What days of the week do students attend?
- ▶ What opportunities are there for work experience?
- ▶ Will this be virtual or in person? Is this mandatory or optional?
- ▶ Will there be help to find a placement?
- ▶ What happens if they don't get GCSE Grade 4 in Maths and/or English?

Financial

- ▶ Are there extras costs for equipment, visits, uniform, books?
- ▶ What financial help is available?

Progression

- ▶ What is the pass rate for this course?
- ▶ What do students go on to do next?
- ▶ If applying for a one Year course – what are the progression routes from this course?
- ▶ What support is available for post 18 progression?

Support

- ▶ What support do they get to make new friends?
- ▶ What support can they expect to receive? This could be learning support, pastoral support (e.g. a tutor), specialist support (counselling, mental health), personal support?
- ▶ Who can they speak to if they are struggling?
- ▶ What support do they get if they decide to leave?

Transport

- ▶ How will they get there?
- ▶ Is there help with the cost of transport?
- ▶ Does the transport fit in with the timetable?
- ▶ Is this the closest place to do this course?

Students with additional needs or concerns

- ▶ Can they come and visit and meet the tutors before they start?
- ▶ How will they be supported at college?
- ▶ Are there quiet places to go during the day?

Leisure

- ▶ What other things can they get involved in? e.g., Sport, drama, charity events, clubs

Parent/carer Contact

- ▶ What contact will there be about their progress once they have started? Will I be informed about attendance and progress?
- ▶ Who can I speak to if I am worried?