

Sixth Form Careers Guidance Handbook

2026/2027

This booklet has been designed to help you with your choices after Sixth Form.

Start your research as early as you can in Year 12, as the summer term will be focused on helping you prepare for your university and apprenticeship applications and you will need to know what you are applying for.

Although you don't need to do everything suggested here, the more you do, the better prepared you will be.

Please keep in mind that although this booklet gives you a good overview of the key opportunities available, it is really important to regularly check your school emails, as new opportunities arise all the time.

The school's [Careers Website](#) is also filled with lots of useful tools and advice.

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What Are My Options?

You have several options after Sixth Form. The most popular choices are to pursue an apprenticeship or go to university. There is lots of advice on these two options in this booklet. However you can also take a Gap Year or go straight into a job. For advice on alternatives to university and apprenticeships see page 6.

Where Do I Begin?

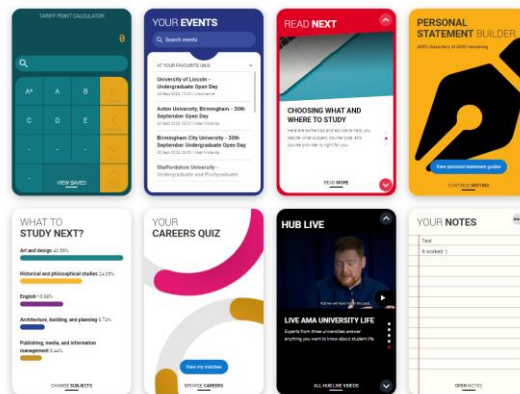
Exploring Careers

A great tool that everyone can use to explore their options is the [UCAS Hub](#).

This is suitable for those considering university and apprenticeships too. Everyone should create an account.

The Hub allows you to:

- take a careers quiz
- search apprenticeships
- explore courses and apprenticeships related to your interests
- keep updated with key dates and deadlines
- get invites to virtual workshops and Q&A sessions with expert advice
- delve into guides on different universities and locations
- chat to students
- complete your UCAS application



INTEREST MATCHES

Exploring [careers related to your interests](#) can help you discover new possibilities.



CAREER QUIZ

Completely lost? Try a quiz that matches your skills and interests to suitable careers.

[What job would suit me?](#)

[Skills Assessment](#)

(this one takes a while but gives detailed results)

JOB PROFILES

Need to know more about a specific career you have in mind?

The [Prospects](#) and [National Careers Service](#) websites have job profiles to explore.

University or Apprenticeship?

Do you know what career you want but are you unsure whether to [go to university or get an apprenticeship](#)? A good pros and cons list can help here.

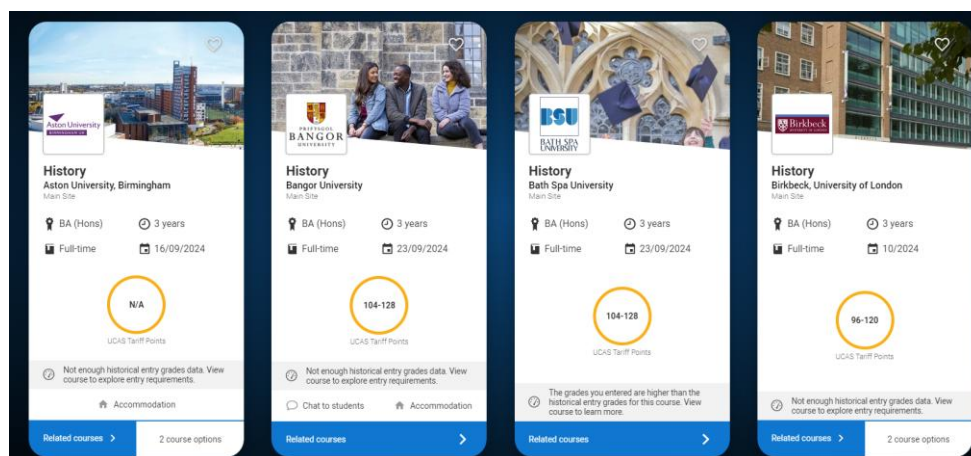
Apprenticeships		University	
PRO	CON	PRO	CON
-Earn while you learn. -Train alongside experts in the field. -Develop the direct skills and knowledge employers need. -You are likely to have a job offer at the end. -You don't have to stay with the same employer if you don't want to, as you will have a qualification to take away. -Degree Apprenticeships allow you to study for a degree at the same time as working. Your degree is funded by the employer and you get paid for a full time job too! - Your employer will give you time to study and you study over a longer period of time compared to undergraduates, making the workload more manageable. Find out more here: Degree Apprenticeships	-Highly competitive and very hard to secure, with multiple stages in the application process. -Demand vastly outstrips availability. -The vacancy you are looking for may not be available in your area or at the time you need it. You may have to be flexible on the type of role or company. -Studying alongside a full-time job is a lot of hard work; you need to be committed. -You won't have the same university experience as those on a traditional undergraduate degree. It is likely you will only be at university one day a week, or for a few weeks of the year, so you may not have the same chance to enjoy the social aspect as much. -Although most employers fund your degree, some, like PwC, no longer fund the degree and you will need to take out a student loan (Lifelong Learning Entitlement).	-It should never be understated that any degree will teach you transferable skills that can be useful in many jobs. Most graduate jobs do not require a specific degree. Instead employers are looking for transferable skills. -University also comes with the big bonus of having a great social scene, with a chance to make lifelong friends and enjoy societies and great nightlife. Would you regret missing out on this if you didn't go to university? -There are lots of university courses that prepare you directly for careers too. These are known as vocational courses, such as medicine, teaching and engineering. -Many degrees also come with options to have a Year in Industry (sandwich degrees), where you can take a gap year in work, building up your work experience to make you more employable.	-Some employers think that some university degrees don't prepare you for real jobs. -Student debt is the biggest worry, and your living costs can mount up, leading most students to get part time work during their studies. However, Student Finance (the Lifelong Learning Entitlement) helps ensure there isn't a barrier to university. You need to decide if the investment is worth it.



Which University and Which Course?

Researching University		
Get university course suggestions based on the A levels/BTECS you are currently studying.	Explore different careers and courses in broad subject areas on the UCAS website.	Still unsure what to study? Try a Subject Taster to see what it might be like studying that subject at Degree level.

Once you know what you might want to study, look at which UK universities offer it using the [UCAS Course Search tool](#). You can filter by different things such as location and predicted grades.



When you find a course you like, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the 'visit our course page' link. This will take you to the university website where there will be lots more information, including a summary of the topics and modules you will be studying. Think about if you will find these interesting to study.

Open Days

Open days are a great way to choose which university is for you. You can search for Open Days with this [Open Day Calendar](#). Most of these will take place in the summer, but there are [virtual tours](#) in the meantime.

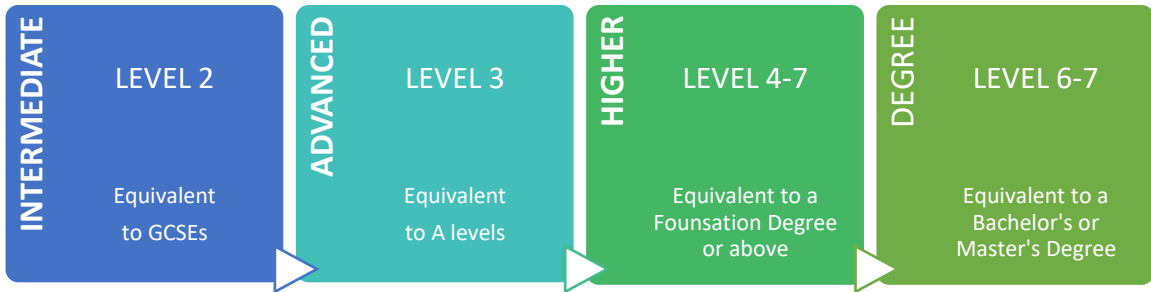
Many of these will take place at the weekend, but if not, please ensure you submit an [Absence Request Form](#), with plenty of notice.



How to Search and Apply for Apprenticeships

Before you decide to only pursue apprenticeships, consider these 3 important points:

1. Although there are thousands of apprenticeships available, there isn't currently an apprenticeship on offer for every job.
2. Apprenticeships are very competitive and it may be hard to secure an offer.
3. There may not be any vacancies for your chosen apprenticeship. What will you do in the meantime?

Apprenticeship Guidance		
Start by checking if your apprenticeship exists by looking at the apprenticeship standards. These are like the curriculum for your apprenticeship. If the career you want is listed, this is a good sign that a vacancy may exist. <i>Please note, these are not live vacancies, they just tell you what apprenticeships can be offered.</i> You can also see where an apprenticeship may lead in future by exploring Occupational Maps.		
Apprenticeships come in 4 different levels: 		
Get apprenticeship suggestions based on the subjects you are currently studying.	Explore apprenticeship advice from the official government website.	Take part in webinars and virtual work experience, to learn more about working for some of the biggest employers in the country. YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
<u>Where to Find Apprenticeship Vacancies</u> Some of the best search tools that are worth checking regularly are: • Find an Apprenticeship • UCAS • Get My First Job • HIGHERiN • Indeed • Not Going to Uni You can also do a google search and visit the websites of the employers you are interested in directly.		<u>The Application Process</u> Your application could include: • An Online Application • A CV and Cover Letter • An Interview • An Assessment Centre • Psychometric tests Your Careers Team can help you with all of this. Just ask.

When looking for vacancies, it can be confusing when a university website says they offer degree apprenticeships, only to find that there is not direct link to apply. This is because the university offers the training for the theory side of the apprenticeship, but the actual job is provided by an employer, and you need to apply directly to the employer instead. PwC is the exception to this; they use the UCAS application, as you would for university courses. You have to make them one of your 5 chosen courses on your university application. This is why research is so vital.

Alternatives to University and Apprenticeships

➤ Why Take a Gap Year?

You can't decide what career to follow

A Gap Year can be a great choice for anyone who is unsure which career pathway to choose. It could be you use the time to gain more work experience in different areas to explore your options.

You have struggled to secure an apprenticeship and need more time

If you have decided that university isn't for you and that you are ready for an apprenticeship, you are then faced with the huge task of trying to secure one. Vacancies might not be available in the career or location you want, the assessment process can also be time consuming and difficult. Dealing with all of this in the middle of Sixth Form exams, your busiest years at school, is not easy. Therefore some students take a Gap Year to get some part time work and really focus on searching and applying for apprenticeships, giving themselves more time to make successful applications.

Travel

If you are lucky enough, you could also use a gap year to travel and see the world. You don't have to take a Gap Year directly after Sixth Form, and it might be you wait until in between or after your university study, so you have more time to save up.

The [UCAS](#) and [Prospects](#) website have some good advice.



➤ Getting a Job

You can go straight into work with your level 3 qualifications. However a degree or apprenticeship qualification will open more doors and keep more options open for the future.

You can find some useful [CV and Cover Letter](#) advice here.

Websites like [Indeed](#) can help you find vacancies but you can also use a recruitment agency like [Pentemps](#) to help you find work.

➤ HTQs

HTQs are another type of qualification you can study for. They are designed by employers to help prepare you for work and sit in between your A levels and degrees. They are only currently available in limited areas but they are growing. You can find out more [here](#).



Super and Extra Curricular Activities

Now that you know what you want to do, you need to take steps to really sell yourself in your application.

Super-Curricular Activities are anything you do beyond your studies that directly relate to the course you are applying for e.g. if you are applying to university for a physics course then, in your personal statement, you should talk about the physics taster lecture you attended and what you learnt from it, or the wider reading you enjoyed.

Extra-Curricular Activities are anything extra to your studies that don't relate directly your course, such as being a Prefect or DofE. Employers and apprenticeship providers will value the extra-curricular activities more than universities will, as they like to hear about the transferable skills you have gained. These are still important for the end of your university statement, but universities are more interested in your subject knowledge, rather than your skills. With that in mind, try to complete at least three of the options below.



Super-Curricular Activities	
Wider Reading	Books or articles
Wider Watching	University taster lectures , documentaries or TED Talks .
Wider Listening	Educational Podcasts
MOOC Courses	These are mini online university courses, of differing lengths, that you can work around your studies. It may be a good idea for the summer holidays when you have a little more time to explore them. <i>You don't have to pay for the certificate at the end, just take a screen shot of the final screen, where it says the course is complete, as evidence.</i>
Oxbridge	The Oxford Super-Curricular Hub and Cambridge Super-Curricular Suggestions are filled with excellent resources to help prepare you for any university.

Don't forget to keep your Super and Extra Curricular Log up to date- check the Careers Padlet for info.

Work Experience

Year 12 Work Experience Week takes place on Wednesday 14th to Friday 16th July 2027.

Work Experience is vital for every student to take part in (even if you can't secure something in the industry of your choice) as you get a taste of the workplace and can develop transferable skills that will help you in any future career.

If you haven't yet secured a placement, please ask your tutor for advice or drop into the Sixth Form Office. Remember it takes a lot of time and effort, so you will need to apply to multiple places, emailing, calling and sometimes even visiting in person.

There are also lots of virtual work experience placements available online. These often give you better access to your chosen industry, however you must still try to arrange a real work experience placement too. The following websites have lots of opportunities:

[Futures For All](#)
[Springpod](#)
[Uptree](#)

Please also keep checking your emails for more opportunities.

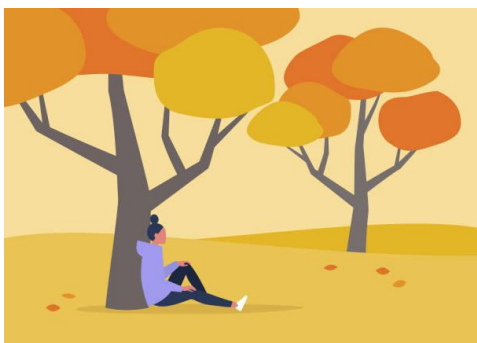
Reflecting on Your Experiences

It is important that you make brief notes when you take part in a super and extra curricular activities. In your personal statement you will need to reflect back on something interesting you learnt, and it needs to be something specific. Use the reflection templates below to make notes about your experiences that will support your applications.

Reflecting on a super-curricular experience	
What did you do?	<i>I read Robert Harris' Fatherland.</i>
What did you learn?	<i>It hypothetically described the world if Axis powers had won World War Two.</i>
Why did you find that interesting?	<i>It led me to speculate the outcome if other historical events were changed; what if Khrushchev didn't back down from placing missiles in Cuba? What if the stock markets didn't collapse in 1929? The hypothetical outcomes are inconceivable but highly fascinating.</i>

Reflecting on work experience. Use the ABC Method.		
Activity	What did you do?	<i>I watched a doctor take blood from a patient who was scared of needles.</i>
Benefit	What did you learn?	<i>I learnt the importance of patience, a smile and a calm, reassuring tone to your voice. The doctor stopped and took the time to explain the procedure carefully, which set the patient at ease.</i>
Course	Why is that relevant to the course you are applying for?	<i>As a future doctor, it is important that I am aware of how to interact with patients. Through observing this doctor on my virtual work placement, I decided I needed to practice some of these skills myself. In my role as Progress Mentor, I support younger pupils who are struggling with their workload and have applied the same tactics as the doctor when speaking with them, so they are comfortable sharing their concerns with me.</i>

Reflecting on an extra-curricular experience (more useful for apprenticeships or the end of your university personal statement). Use the PEER method		
Point	What point are you trying to make.	<i>I have good communication skills.</i>
Evidence	Prove it with a specific example.	<i>I have developed my communication skills through Debate Club.</i>
Expand	Give more detail.	<i>Being an avid member of the school's Debate Club, I have not only developed good communication skills by presenting my views in front of a large audience, but I have also listened to the opinions of others and learned how to respond thoughtfully and respectfully.</i>
Relevance	How is this relevant to the job/course you are applying for?	<i>This skill will be invaluable as a nurse when interacting with patients who may be rude when feeling vulnerable.</i>



Globalbridge

Don't forget to keep updating your globalbridge account with your achievements. You can track the skills you develop through all of your experiences in and out of school. In the future, this can be used as a digital CV or record of achievement. You also have access to a wide range of career insights with employers. Login [here](#).



Your Career Is a Lifelong Journey

It is important to keep in mind that you may never get that eureka moment when you find your dream career. There is, unfortunately, no perfect job. Each career will have its good and bad elements. If you can find a career you enjoy, that pays enough to fund the lifestyle you want, and that has more good days than bad, then you have done well.

Careers used to be thought about as ladders, where you start at the bottom and work your way up in the same profession for many years (sometimes your whole life). Although some careers still exist like this, in most cases, careers are much more flexible. People change careers, make sideways moves into different roles, or start over and retrain in completely different fields.

Knowing this can be quite freeing and exciting, and takes the pressure off making a big decision about your career now, as the choices you make are not fixed. You are making a choice about the next few years, not your whole life. However it can also be a bit overwhelming too if you want stability in your career. You may find the [Squiggly Careers Podcast](#) helpful.



If you need help or support, please send an email to Miss Killick or ask your tutor to request a meeting with the Careers Team.