

Updated September 2009



**Don't stop doing  
what you love**

[Information about Higher Education](#)

**DON'T STOP. Aimhigher...**



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# Hello Hello

You're probably just preparing for GCSEs or a Diploma and certainly haven't got the rest of your life all mapped out – but it's never too early to start thinking about what's ahead for you. This booklet could help. We start with a quiz to help you choose your career and tell you why going on to college or uni will increase your chances of getting it. We put a stop to some of the myths that you might have heard about higher education, then ask a student to reveal what uni life is really like. (You'll be surprised!) Finally, we talk about how you can carry on studying what you love – and have loads of fun doing it. Just ask the students we interview, who got the qualifications they wanted and went on to do amazing things.

[That could be you too!](#)

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### Want to know more

about **higher education**, then click on...

[www.direct.gov.uk/uni](http://www.direct.gov.uk/uni)

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# IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!

What do you lot want for your future and how are you going to get it? **YOU** tell us!



"I went on a plane when I was five and since then all

I've wanted to be is a pilot. I'm always on the internet finding out about how to do it. I'm into sports too, but being a pilot means I can travel and earn a good wage. I'm going to take A level Maths, Physics and English, then go to uni. I've spoken to people who've been and it sounds great!"

**Daniel Carvose,**  
16, Essex



"I dream of being a children's nurse. I love helping people

and I want to feel like I'm doing something important. I'm going to study an HND in Health and Social Care at college and work in my local hospital, then do a Nursing degree. I'm doing this for me."

**Kirsten Graham,**  
15, Cambridge



"I used to be into football and TV, but now I love playing

on my computer, so I'm going to carry that on at university. It makes sense! I want to become a graphic designer – and my teacher thinks I should apply for a Computer Science and Web Design course. One day I'll design CD covers and be my own boss."

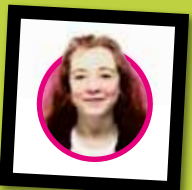
**Joe Lauder,**  
15, London



"There are a lot of things I enjoy, like dancing and art, but I want

to be a lawyer. People say I'm good at arguing! My plan is to do A levels and then go to university. No one in my family has been to uni, so I have to force myself to think I can do it. I want to feel independent."

**Bineeta Parekh,**  
16, Birmingham



"I recently did work experience at my old primary school and loved it. So I've decided I want to be an English teacher. I've applied to Liverpool Hope University so I can still live at home and save money. It's a bit scary because I'll be on my own, but also exciting and new."

**Danielle Byrne,**  
18, Liverpool

## Shakiria Bryan

16, London

### Dream job:

Social worker

### Why?

"I've been through difficult times in my life, so I want to use those experiences to help other kids out of it."

### How she's going to get it:

"I'll do a Social Work degree, but first I'm going to college to do English, Maths and IT, and build up my confidence."

**Personal motto:** "Make the most of what you've got."



## James Lister

15, Peterborough

### Dream job:

Building surveyor or architectural technician

### Why?

"I'm into woodwork at school and helped my dad fit our new kitchen. I loved it."

### How he's going to do it:

"A Construction HND course at my local college, then a degree."

**Personal motto:** "If you love what you do, you'll do it better than anyone!"



News, views and what's in it  
for you... (uni and college, that is)

## You've got the X factor!

If it's your ambition to work in (rather than star on) TV, it might shock you to know that there are thousands of courses available in that field! Think about it. When it comes to a show like 'The X Factor', researchers and producers vet the contestants, set and lighting designers update the set to keep it looking fresh and dynamic, while a team of designers work on the website. On 'EastEnders', a group of scriptwriters come up with the action. The crew includes wardrobe, hair and make-up and sound engineers. Photographers are needed to take photos of the cast. Work experience can help you achieve your ambitions. Laura Hughes, 20, is studying for a BA in History and English and during her holidays worked as a runner (means go-getter) on 'EastEnders'. "Behind the scenes everyone is really busy, rushing around from set to set. I met some of the actors, and they're lovely. My ideal job now is to be a TV researcher." Sorted.

## BANDS live

If you're into music, then expect to hear the next big things first as a student. Every year, they get treated to exclusive access to top and unseen bands. Acts like The Kooks, The View, Paolo Nutini and Arctic Monkeys have all done gigs at universities.

## BELIEVE the hype?

Ever wondered what life at university is like? See for yourself at summer school. For one week, you get to live the life of a student. That means attending lectures, living in student rooms, eating in the canteen (like everyone else) and going out. And the best thing? It's FREE! Ask your teacher or Connexions Personal Adviser for more information.

## REASONS TO BE HAPPY AT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

1. The freedom. For the first time in your life, you get treated like an adult and start answering to yourself.
2. You choose – to study something you're passionate about.
3. A clean slate. No one will know you were the 'whatever' at school.
4. The friends you make – really easily. You go through this thing together from day one.
5. The freebies. Students get cheap travel, and discounts in Top Shop and Top Man and even when eating out.
6. Less pressure. If you're uncertain career-wise, it gives you time to decide.
7. Loads of facilities. Think sports centre, computers, radio station, cafés, free places to hang with mates...
8. ... And cool clubs. From snowboarding to the film society, there is something for everyone.
9. The choices, jobs, salary it gives you in the long run.
10. The knowledge (and not just from your course). You learn loads about yourself – and others.

## QUICK QUIZ

### Match the celeb to their college course

- ⇒ J K (Harry Potter inventor) Rowling
- ⇒ Kevin ('Hollyoaks' actor) Sacre
- ⇒ Johnny (I'm funny) Vegas
- ⇒ Peter (I'm funnier) Kay

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> French?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Media Performance? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramics? | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts?   |

Answers:  
JK took a French degree, Johnny passed Ceramics, Pete studied an HND in Media Performance and Kevin studied Performing Arts

# Talent spotting

Confused about your future? Don't be. Take our quiz to discover where your natural talents lie...

## Before you START...

Answer **YES** or **NO** to the questions in each section. Where you have the most 'yes' answers, that's the category that will suit you most.

What if you answer **YES** to the same number of questions in two sections? Well, that's great! You're not always just cut out for one job in life. Think about combining the two areas – and show the world what you're capable of!

## Techy TYPE?



Q.

Are you a perfectionist who won't leave a job half done?

**YES**  **NO**

Q.

Is your mobile the latest on the market and full of downloads and video clips?

**YES**  **NO**

Q.

Are you so good with numbers your mates always turn to you when they need help with maths (which you can do in your head)?

**YES**  **NO**

Q.

Do you book tickets for gigs on the internet?

**YES**  **NO**

Q.

Do you hang out with a small group of mates and relish your own space?

**YES**  **NO**

## Answer mostly YES?

**Wow – you love a challenge and problem solving, and have great technical skills.**

**You'd be great as an:**

### Accountant

You'd be responsible for day-to-day running of all the cash in a company.

**Suggested qualifications:** Advanced Apprenticeship for ICT Professionals, or HND, Foundation Degree or degree in Business Studies or Accountancy.

**Starting salary:** £13,000

**Potential earnings:** £80,000+

### Video game developer

You'd design, test and build computer games.

**Suggested qualifications:** Foundation Degree, HND or degree in Computer Science, Interactive Technology or Graphic Design, degree in Interactive Systems and Video Game Design.

**Starting salary:** £15,000

**Potential earnings:** £45,000

## Creative genius at work!



### Creative GENIUS?

Q.

Would you say it doesn't matter how cool your mates are, as long as they're genuine?

YES  NO

Q.

Do you write your thoughts in a blog and write loads of emails?

YES  NO

Q.

Are you full of ideas you get from everyday stuff like going out to listening to music?

YES  NO

Q.

Would you rather be up and about than spend all day in bed?

YES  NO

Q.

If you're working on a project, do you like starting from scratch?

YES  NO

#### Answer mostly YES?

You're practical and have a strong sense of what you want and how to get it. You'd be fantastic as a:

#### Product development scientist

Work with new foods (chocolate, sweets, chilled products) testing flavours and the quality.

**Suggested qualifications:** Foundation Degree, HND or degree in Food Science, Nutrition and Dietetics.

**Starting salary:** £15,000

**Potential earnings:** £30,000

#### PR/marketing specialist

You'd manage press campaigns for celebrities, bands, products and events. That means securing coverage on TV and in the papers.

**Suggested qualifications:** Advanced Apprenticeship in Marketing and Communications, Foundation Degree, HND or degree in Marketing and PR.

**Starting salary:** £12,000

**Potential earnings:** £70,000

#### Construction engineer

You supervise the work on the designs of buildings, from shops and offices to the Olympic Village.

**Suggested qualifications:** Foundation Degree in Construction, HND in Construction Management and degree in Construction Business Management. (You could also think about doing a degree in Architecture.)

**Starting salary:** £15,000

**Potential earnings:** £34,000

#### Also think about:

law, scriptwriter for TV dramas and soaps, dancer/choreographer, prop designer, journalist, landscape gardener and quantity surveyor.

### Born BOSS?



Q.

Do you know how you spent your last £10?

YES  NO

Q.

If a friend gets into a dispute, do you try to calm down the situation rather than let them get on with it?

YES  NO

Q.

A planned night out falls apart. Do your mates look to you for a back-up plan?

YES  NO

Q.

Are you confident enough to ask someone out?

YES  NO

Q.

Have you got a rep as being bossy (of course, you like to translate that to meaning leader)?

YES  NO



### Answer mostly YES?

You're not one for taking orders, love making cash and will speak your mind if it gets the right results. Good jobs for you would be a:

#### Stockbroker

You'd buy and sell stocks, shares and other financial products for various clients.

**Suggested qualifications:** degree in Economics, Law or Accounting and Finance.

**Starting salary:** £25,000

**Potential earnings:** sky's your limit!

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#### Trendspotter

All big companies (Nike, Levi's...) employ people to research what's going to be the next big thing.

**Suggested qualifications:** Foundation Degree, HND or degree in Business Studies and Marketing.

**Starting salary:** £17,000

**Potential earnings:** £45,000

#### Chef

The next Jamie Oliver? You'll be managing a kitchen, inventing recipes and making sure the food critics love you!

**Suggested qualifications:** Advanced Apprenticeship in Hospitality and Catering, or degree in Catering Management and Food Studies.

**Starting salary:** £8,000

**Potential earnings:** £38,000 (unless you're Jamie 'very rich' Oliver!)

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#### Also think about:

barrister, bank manager, fashion buyer and department store manager.

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## Outgoing PEOPLE PLEASER?

4

Q.

When you're at a party, do you always make sure everyone is getting on?

YES  NO

Q.

Do you get really bored if things aren't constantly on the move?

YES  NO

Q.

Is one of the best things about school seeing your mates every day?

YES  NO

Q.

When you have a night in, do you usually find yourself on the phone, with friends dropping round unannounced?

YES  NO

Q.

Are you interested in what people have to say, even if you don't think you're going to agree with them?

YES  NO

### Answer mostly YES?

You don't get stressed easily and love meeting new people. You'd get a kick out of working in a team or giving something back, so you should think about the following jobs:



### Youth counsellor

You work with young children in schools or centres on everything from drug counselling and job choices to outward bounds.

**Suggested qualifications:** Advanced Apprenticeship in Youth Work, Foundation Degree or degree in Counselling and Psychology, Youth and Community Work, Community Education. Postgraduate diploma in Youth Work.

**Starting salary:** £12,500

**Potential earnings:** £37,000

### Hotel manager

You would manage a team of people, run the hotel, look after customers and market the business.

**Suggested qualifications:** Foundation Degree or HND in Hospitality Management, degree in Leisure and Tourism.

**Starting salary:** £12,000

**Potential earnings:** £80,000

### Marketing and events

Organising every detail of a party from the food and venue right down to the drinks and colour of the carpet!

**Suggested qualifications:** Foundation Degree or HND in Business Studies, Hospitality Management.

**Starting salary:** £10,000

**Potential earnings:** £40,000

### Also think about:

fitness instructor, sports development officer and fashion lawyer.

Still unsure about which subject to study?

The Stamford Test is a short questionnaire that can help to match your interests and abilities to possible higher education subjects. Find out more at [www.ucas.com/stamford](http://www.ucas.com/stamford)

# WHAT'S UP WITH UNI AND COLLEGE?

You've all heard of Higher Education, but can you list what it can do for you? Make sure you're clued up on all your options...

## I don't know enough about HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is a type of course that earns you a qualification like an Honours degree or a Foundation Degree. They can be taken at a university, a college or some further education colleges. Generally, you need to continue your studies for another two years after Year 11 to be able to enter higher education. Qualifications for entry include AS/A2 levels, Advanced Diplomas, NVQ Level 3... but there are other ways to do it.

### None of my mates are thinking about going on to uni, why should I?

Bear in mind that 94% of students agree that university is a good investment (according to a Unite/TNS Student Experience Report 2007). This isn't about your mates; this is about you and your future. "More than seven out of ten young people reckon they're likely to go to uni – so don't be one of those that miss out." (Sutton Trust survey 2007)

### Why wouldn't I just get a proper job?

**Number one:** Getting into a job doesn't mean you can't keep on learning. NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) (if at Level 3) and Apprenticeships both involve working (and being paid) at the same time as studying, and can lead on to higher education. One option is a Foundation Degree, studied part or full time while you're in work. The car firm BMW and airline KLM UK Engineering are just two employers who could send you on a course to make sure you have the right skills for their company.

**Number two:** If you have a higher education qualification, the more chance you have of bagging yourself a job you really want – with a better salary. Over the course of their working life, the

holder of an undergraduate degree can expect to earn, on average, comfortably over £100,000 more, net of taxes and in today's valuation, than a similar person with two or more A levels. Many jobs require a higher education qualification. It sounds harsh, but leave studying behind at 16 and the type of work you're qualified for will be limiting your options.

### Aren't the courses you can take boring?

Slight shock for you: there are 50,000 courses to pick from! So there have to be a few in that lot you find interesting. You might want to think about a subject from school that you're good at or enjoy, like French, Biology or History. Or you might choose a new subject that you're interested in or a course that is geared towards a specific career that offers on-the-job training/placements. For example, you can study Journalism instead of English, Computer Game Design instead of IT, or Marine Biology instead of Science, Accountancy rather than Maths. Well, it all depends what you're into! To search, review and compare uni subjects, and find out what students thought of their studies, including results of the National Student Survey, go to [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)



## Here are some examples of different courses...

- ⇒ Business Studies
- ⇒ Health and Social Care
- ⇒ Computer Games Technology
- ⇒ Manufacturing
- ⇒ Leisure and Tourism
- ⇒ Sports Management
- ⇒ Maths
- ⇒ Geography
- ⇒ English
- ⇒ History

### But I'm no good at anything!

If you feel like a failure don't write yourself off. Find something to inspire you. What do you love doing? You might not automatically think it's worthwhile but our bet is you can turn your passion into a course and career. So, like playing video games = software designer. Sci-fi addict = special effects designer/film production. Into shopping = trendspotter or stylist. Always interested in what makes people tick = counsellor. Also go to [www.uni4me.com](http://www.uni4me.com)

### Is it OK if my grades aren't all As?

You have to have some ability – no course is easy. But you don't need straight As in all your subjects. What you do need is to choose a subject that keeps you interested and motivated. Entry onto a higher education course can also be affected by your commitment (e.g. work experience, portfolio), your outside interests and enthusiasm. College and uni look at the whole person. A teacher or Connexions Personal Adviser will be able to tell you what you need to get on higher education courses for any career or you can look at information about individual courses at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

### You MUST need A levels before you take on a higher education course though?

That's only one way! In fact, depending on the higher education course you want to take, you don't necessarily need A levels at all. There are loads of different routes onto a higher education course.



Instead of A levels, you could take an Advanced Diploma, an Advanced Apprenticeship, a BTEC National Diploma or an NVQ at Level 3. These qualifications can be equal to one or more A levels, meaning that you can go on to a degree. Remember, there's no 'right' way, just 'your' way. For some higher education courses, you need to have studied specific subjects beforehand, so get advice from your teacher or Connexions Personal Adviser too. Need more convincing?

## HOW TO...

Get to COLLEGE or UNI.

It's not just A levels and uni, you know... At 16, you could stay

in full-time EDUCATION and take...

- ⇒ **A levels (AS/A2 levels)**
- ⇒ **Advanced Diploma**
- ⇒ **NVQs at Level 3 and above**
- ⇒ **BTEC Nationals and OCR Level 3 Nationals**
- ⇒ **International Baccalaureate**

All these can lead to **HIGHER EDUCATION!**

Try it another way...

# GCSEs are enough!

I can't face A levels and want to start earning some money.

If that's how you feel, don't despair – there are loads of other ways to get where you want.

How about getting the qualifications for higher education by doing something practical? You could choose a vocationally focused course, and maybe even get paid while you learn.

Lots of these qualifications have been set up with help from employers, so you also know you're learning the skills they'll be looking for.

It's perfect if you have a good idea of what you want to do for a job.

## Diplomas for 14–19-year-olds

The Diploma is a new qualification for young people, designed to bridge the gap between academic and vocational learning. The two-year courses offer a more practical, hands-on way of gaining the essential skills and knowledge that employers and universities look for. An Advanced Diploma is equivalent to 3.5 A levels, and may often include an A level as part of it.

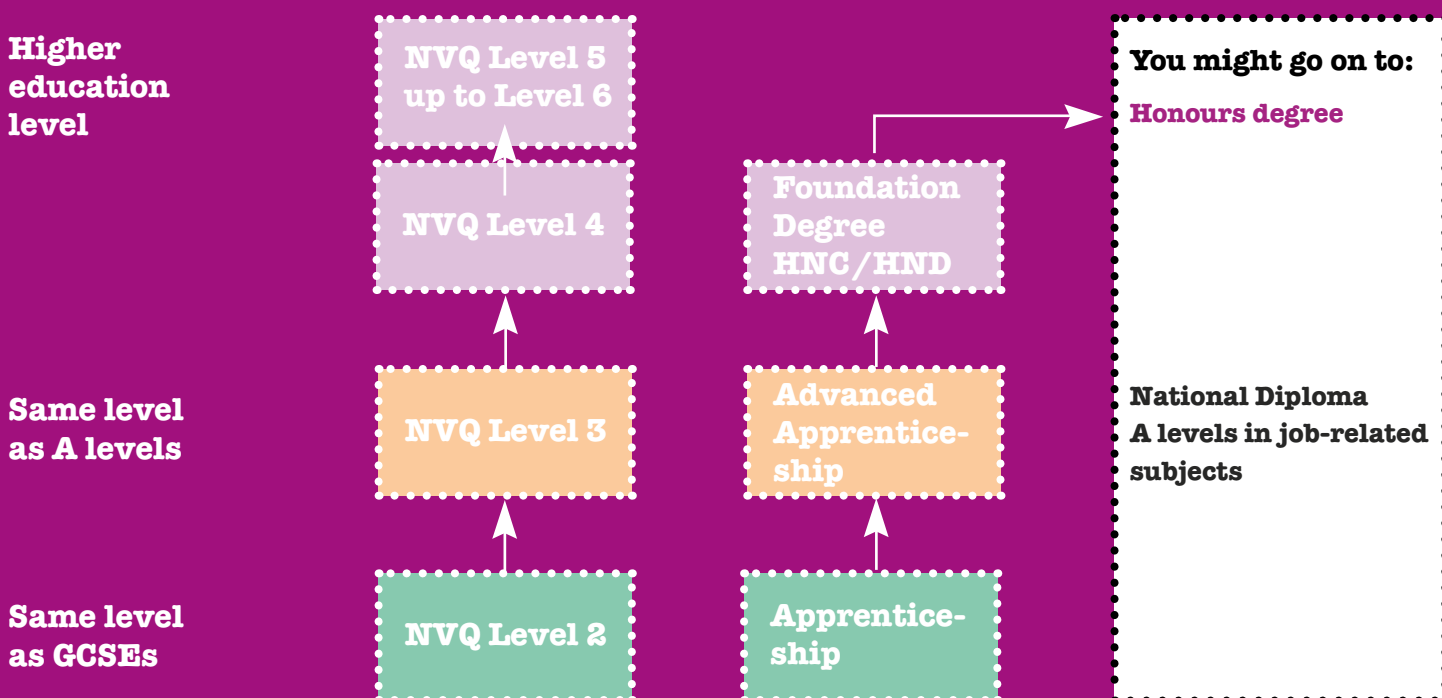
Since September 2008, selected schools and colleges around the country have begun to offer the new Diploma qualification alongside GCSEs and A levels.

## Earn while you learn

One way to go is to get on an Apprenticeship. These are not just for engineering or building work – there are over 180 to choose from. You can do an Apprenticeship in anything from Farming to Finance, or Health and Beauty to Business Studies.

As part of your Apprenticeship training, you will achieve an NVQ at Level 2 or 3, technical certificates that show you understand why you do things at work, and possibly other qualifications. If you want, you can work your way up with NVQs at Levels 4 or 5. These can take you right up to really well-paid jobs.

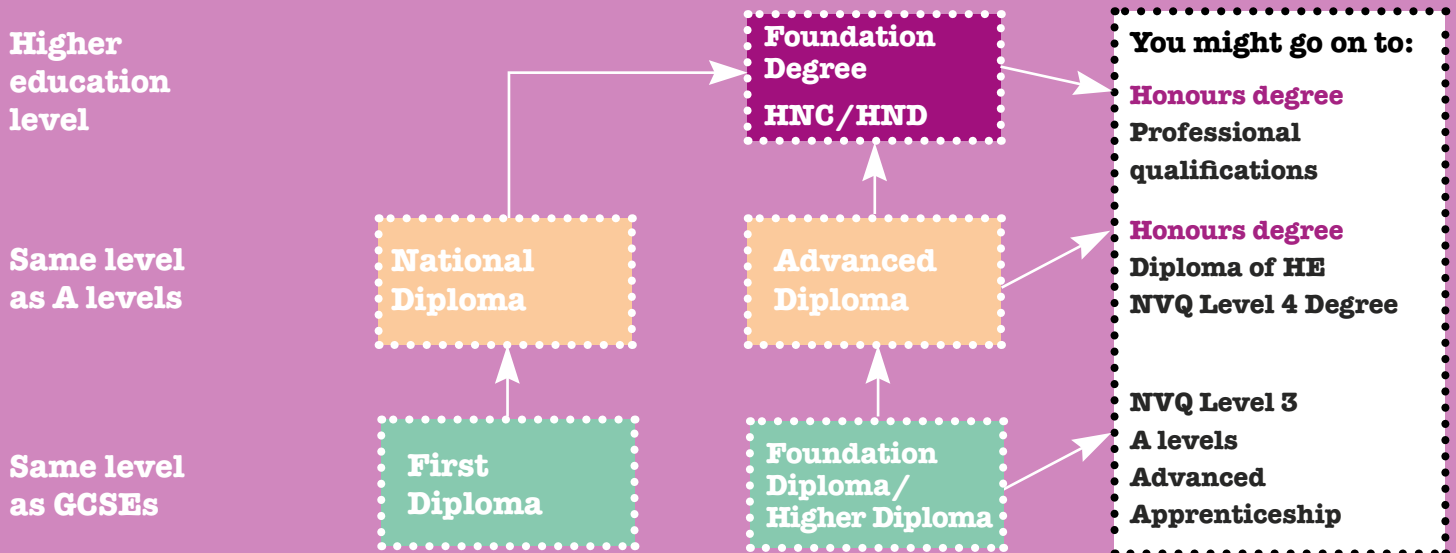
There might be some college work one day a week, but basically you learn at work, by doing the job.



## Hands-on courses

Another way is to take a course at college, but learning the hands-on stuff as well as the theory. You learn the skills to get a job in an area of work like IT, retail, engineering or music and the performing arts.

You could start with a BTEC First Diploma or a Higher Diploma, and work up through the levels. A BTEC National Diploma would come next or an Advanced Diploma, then a Higher National Certificate or Diploma (HNC/HND), which is a higher education course. With a BTEC National Diploma, you could also go on to a Foundation Degree or a degree.



## Mix it up

The best thing is, you don't have to follow a set path. You can pick and mix the different kinds of courses to suit yourself. For instance, you could do a BTEC First Diploma or a Higher Diploma at school as well as some GCSEs, then look for a job. While there, as long as your job is at the right level, you could study for an NVQ Level 3. And this would give you the qualifications to study for a Foundation Degree. BTEC National Diplomas, the Advanced Diploma, Advanced Apprenticeships and some NVQs at Level 3 are all qualifications that could get you onto a higher education course.

Check out 'Which Way Now?', a workbook to help Year 9 students with options decisions, including tasks to complete to help you make well-informed decisions on subject choices, at [www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow/](http://www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow/), or 'It's Your Choice', aimed at Year 11 students, helping you to make decisions relating to your post-16 phase of learning, at [www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice/](http://www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice/)

## How they did it...

### Mark's way into nursing:\*

- NVQ Level 1 in Care
- NVQ Level 2 in Care
- NVQ Level 3 in Care
- HE Diploma in Nursing
- Degree in Nursing

### Stefan's way into design work:\*

- GCSEs, grades D–G, plus an A in Art
- BTEC First Diploma in Art and Design
- BTEC National Diploma in 3D Design
- Degree in Transport Design

### Nicola's way into business management:\*

- GCSEs, grades A–C
- BTEC National Diploma in Business and Finance
- Apprenticeship: NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service
- Advanced Apprenticeship: NVQ Level 3 in Administration and Management
- NVQ Level 4 in Management
- Working towards NVQ Level 5 in Management

**Ask your teacher or Connexions Personal Adviser if you want to find out more about all the options you have. Find out more about post-16 qualifications at [www.direct.gov.uk/learning](http://www.direct.gov.uk/learning)**

\*These are possible routes. Please check the relevant institution for entry requirements.

# WORK & STUDY

## What are Apprenticeships?

You can do on-the-job training leading to an NVQ Level 2 with an Apprenticeship or an NVQ Level 3 with an Advanced Apprenticeship, while picking up other useful qualifications connected with the area of work you are in. Usually they take between one and four years. There are Apprenticeships available in more than 80 industries (from accounting to transport) and you get paid. It also gives you the opportunity to go on to higher education.

## What it feels like to be an Apprentice...

David, 21, from Cornwall tells you...

"I was a bit naughty at school but loved practical lessons like design and technology and helping my dad fix the car. At 16, I became an Apprentice helicopter engineer! I got paid – so had a bit of cash in my pocket – and did an NVQ Level 3 in Engineering.\* I'm usually stripping engines, but last year I was filmed hanging out of a helicopter for a TV show. Amazing! I want to be a pilot now and I'm looking into degrees. This has taught me I can do anything I want."

\*David would have been studying the NVQ Level 3 as part of his Apprenticeship.



## GO PLACES – FAST

What you can study in **HIGHER EDUCATION:** Three ways to do it

**Higher education qualification:** Honours degree (usually Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc)). This is the most common qualification.

**What that entails:** A three- to four year full-time course studying at uni or college. Can also be taken part time. The sandwich course includes a year at work.

**Examples of courses:** Drama and Screen Studies, Adventure Tourism, Chemistry, Art History.

**Pros:** Gives you the chance to study a subject in depth. Wide choice of professional job options. Can go on to gain other professional qualifications, e.g. a Master's degree or PhD.

.....  
**Higher education qualification:** Foundation Degree

**What that entails:** Two years if studied full time (part time is often three to four years) where you work with an employer and study.

**Examples of courses:** Tourism, Aircraft Engineering, New Media Design, Veterinary Nursing, Automotive Manufacturing. There are about 1,300 different options.

**Pros:** Get stuck into a job (and see if you like it!). Often employers offer you a job at the end of your study. It gives you the option to progress on to further higher education qualifications and to the final year of specified degrees.

.....  
**Higher education qualification:** Higher National Diploma/Certificate (HND/HNC) or Diploma of Higher Education

**What that entails:** HNCs take a year full time or two years part time. Full time HNDs or Diplomas of HE take two years, and can also be taken part time. While you're studying you do work placements (and get paid for them!).

**Examples of courses:** Photography, Beauty and Holistics, Public Administration and Theatre Design.

**Pros:** You learn something with a job in mind. You can convert to a degree with an extra year of study.

## If only you knew me

Student Kris solves all your stuff about college and uni

**Who:** Kris Anton

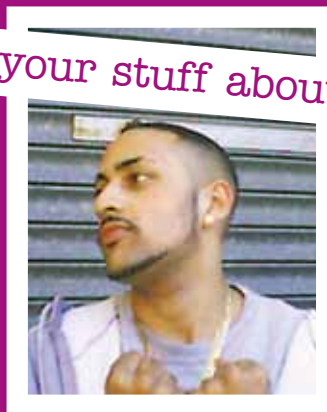
**Age:** 20

**At:** Middlesex University studying Journalism

**How he did it:** Five GCSEs, a GNVQ Intermediate in Media Communication and Production (one year) then GNVQ in Advanced Media Communication and Production (two years). Is first in his family to go to uni.

**Favourite things:** Hip hop, books on conspiracy theories, going out, writing.

**Ambition:** To start a media company teaching young people how to produce films.



**Q.**

If I ever said I wanted to go to college or uni, my mates, even my family, would laugh at me.  
**Steve, 14, York**

**Kris says:** Before I went off to college, I was only interested in hanging out with my mates, and reckoned students were rich and annoying! My friends didn't want to carry on studying past GCSEs – many of them started working part time or just stayed unemployed, but deep down I wanted to do something constructive. So do what I did: talk to a Connexions Personal Adviser. We talked a lot about subjects I liked. My mum was shocked when I told her, but is proud of me for being the first person in my family to go on to higher education. And YES! My friends were a bit weird about it, and called me a boffin. Oh well, I'm sure I'll be doing the laughing when they're begging me to pick them up in my brand new Mercedes Benz and earning loads a year in my amazing job!

**Q.**

I want to be able to go to college, but I'm disabled so I won't make it.  
**Sheebah, 13, Bolton**

**Kris says:** Don't make the mistake of thinking a disability will mess up your chances of making it big. There's more support than ever. There are loans for fees, loans for living costs, non repayable grants and money from your university or college. On top of that, there's the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA), which is non repayable help for extra costs you have as a student and as a result of your disability. You can get more info from the Student Finance England helpline on 0845 607 7577, or call the information line on 0800 731 9133 for a copy of the guide 'Bridging the Gap'. Braille and large print versions of this guide are also available.

**Q.**

Is it OK to just follow what your mates are doing? I've no idea how to decide what I want.  
**Leanne, 14, Somerset**

**Kris says:** The short answer is no – be yourself! Don't panic just because you don't know what to do yet. You've still got time to decide. Concentrate on your exams because more qualifications – more choices. Deciding what you want to spend your life doing isn't easy. Some people change their minds well into their 20s. I've only known I wanted to do journalism since my GNVQ course. That's when, for the first time, it felt like the right thing to do.

**Q.**

Isn't university for posh rich people? How is someone like me going to fit in and find friends at uni?  
**Cleo, 14, Lincoln**

**Kris says:** You're talking to someone who never thought they were the university 'type'. I was constantly fighting the fear that I wasn't good enough or it would be me against them. But the one thing I've learned is whether you're poor, rich, white, black, purple, whatever – education is for everyone if you're prepared to work for it. I've made so many friends through uni who've shown me different things in life, and it's made me more confident about talking to new people too.

## GOT A PROBLEM?

Visit [www.uni4me.com](http://www.uni4me.com) for all your

**FAQs SORTED**

# THE MYTHS OF COLLEGE BUSTED!

Full of swots. Too much dosh. Only for the elite. Just how much of that stuff about college and uni is accurate? We sort fact from fiction...

## Everyone at university is posh and rich – FALSE

No they're not! Nearly one million 18–21-year-olds are currently doing a higher education course – they can't all be posh and rich! Eighty-eight per cent of students under 21 starting undergraduate courses in the UK are from state schools. Courses are a mix of people from all backgrounds, ages and ethnic origins, so forget any fears of not fitting in! The fact that hardly anyone who went to college or uni regrets it says it all. But don't take our word for it: for a student's view of what life is really like, go to [www.uni4me.com](http://www.uni4me.com)

## A higher education course takes forever – FALSE

It usually takes between two and four years, depending on the qualification. But think about this: if you're 16 or 18 you've got roughly 40 years of your life to work. And no one wants to do boring work for that long. The fact is, the more qualifications you have, the more likely you are to get a job you really love. Think of higher education as an investment in your future.

## I'd never be able to afford it – FALSE

Many people believe that they will never be able to go to university or college because they don't have the money to pay for it. Universities and colleges can charge tuition fees for full-time courses of up to £3,290 – some will charge less – but you can take out a loan for tuition fees which you don't have to start repaying until you've left your course and are earning over £15,000. Plus there are grants, loans and other financial support to help you while you're studying.

Visit [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance) for more information on what's available.

## You have to move away from home to study – FALSE

Try telling that to the thousands of students who go to their local college and study from home because it's cheaper. Plus points: you don't always have to pay rent, can keep your part-time job and friends, and might get home cooking into the bargain! With over 50,000 courses on offer, there has to be one in your area to suit you. Search here: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and click on the list of institutions or courses.

## Show me the MONEY!

If you're 16–18 and in full-time secondary education of any kind (at school or college), you could be in line for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which could earn you up to £30 a week for staying on in education. The EMA also gives bonuses for attendance and good progress. Find out how to apply by asking your teacher or Connexions Personal Adviser, or log on to [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema)

**What is interesting to know** is that all students who receive EMA and then go on to university could qualify for the top level of grant in 2010/11. This may help to ease your mind about the cost of going into higher education.

# MISTAKES!

you don't want to make when thinking about college or university...

**1**

## **DON'T...**

... be pushed into making decisions before you're ready. Talk to the experts

– careers advisers, students, teachers, people in the job you're interested in (ask them what college course they took, the pros and cons). Get on the internet and search for the course/job you're interested in for advice. Check out the websites for the colleges and unis you're interested in too.

**2**

## **DON'T...**

... be put off because you think it's just like school, and you've had

enough of that! College and uni couldn't be more different. There's loads more freedom on a higher education course. It's not about sitting in a classroom and being told what to do. There are no bells, assemblies or detention. You might only have one or two days of actual lectures or training so have to organise the rest of your time yourself.

**3**

## **DON'T...**

... get caught up in stereotypes. These days, girls can build bridges, and

boys can be nursery nurses. If people give you hassle, or say you'll never do it, ignore them. These are YOUR dreams.

## **CASE STUDY**

"I wasn't the best in my class and didn't get loads of encouragement at home. If someone had told me I was going to become a mountain climber, I'd have believed that before believing I'd get to college. But you've got to get over that feeling of thinking you can't do it."

**Todd Stewart studied Music Technology and is now a music producer**

## **CASE STUDY**

"When I was 14, I didn't want to go to uni – I saw it as this strange, big place. I thought no one could be as nice as the friends I already had. It only took two weeks to settle in. There are no 'cool' groups like at school."

**Karena Bouri chose a Textile Design degree and now does up houses and works for an interior design company**

# DAY IN THE LIFE OF A STUDENT

**Name:** Laura Nixon

**Age:** 19

**Course:** Chemistry with Medicinal Chemistry

**University:** Imperial College, London

**From:** Manchester

**Ambition:** To do pharmaceutical research

2nd year student Laura Nixon, 19, takes you through a typical day at her university

## Get out of bed... 8:00 AM

I crawl out of bed. I had a really good time with my flatmates last night at a gig, but I'm a big sleeper! I check my emails, then throw on jeans and T – it's great not having to wear a uniform. I don't leave until the last minute because I only live opposite the uni. I looked on the UCAS website and went to open days, where you look around, before deciding to come here. I just love the feel of the place.

## First tutorial today... 9:00 AM

First tutorial of the day. It's similar to a lesson but only has four to eight people in it. We call our tutor by his first name – it's pretty relaxed, and we chat about any problems we're having before getting on with our work. It's a lot more interactive: you're expected to join in and work answers out for yourself. At first, I was afraid to speak but I got over it because I realised I had valid points to make too!

## Second tutorial... 10:00 AM

Chemistry tutorial. There are up to 80 people in these. The lecturer never asks questions, he just tells you stuff, and it's up to you how many notes you take. You have to be much more self-motivated, which takes time to get used to.

## With my mates... 12:30 PM

Go to a Rock Society meeting. We chat about organising and promoting our next gig night, and how to blag discounts in music shops. I've got involved in lots of societies and like partying but still manage to do all my work! There's a sandwich shop nearby so we all pop out and grab one.

## Doing an experiment... 2:00 PM

Lab class lasts about three hours – but you're left to your own devices (there's no one watching over you) and in between experiments you can pop out for coffee (as long as it's not dangerous!). My lab partner is Anna. Don't be scared of a uni's reputation. At first I was afraid people would be so brainy that I wouldn't make friends who would 'get me'. But I remember seeing Anna in my first week and thinking 'She's a Goth too'. We got on brilliantly straight away.

## With boyfriend... 5:45 PM

Leave the library after a bit of studying. I meet my boyfriend Andy who's studying music technology at London Metropolitan Uni just across town. I live in halls and pay £90 a week. I have to do my own cooking so I spend another £20 a week on food but I share a kitchen with 60 others! Which means sometimes there can be a bit of a queue for the oven...

## Outside halls... 6:30 PM

Meet Gemma and Claire (who live here too) and we watch 'The Simpsons' while our pizza warms up. People ask if I get homesick, but I'm so busy I haven't got time. Do you know how many students live in these halls? 300! That makes it difficult to feel lonely. It took a while to relax, but now we're always knocking on each other's doors.

## 8:30 PM

I put on my favourite cool black skirt. I'm seeing my friend Tig who works behind the student bar in the evenings, then we're going dancing (note to self: must be up for lectures at nine tomorrow...!).



Get out of bed...



First tutorial today...



Second tutorial...



Doing an experiment...



With my mates...



With boyfriend...



Outside h

# JUST DO IT. WE DID!

Meet three people who landed their dream jobs. You could too!

## **Lynsey Carratt, 23, Hull**

**Job:** Funding officer for local council

**Salary:** £16,000 – £33,000

**Qualifications:** Business and Management degree at the University of Hull (Scarborough campus)

**How she did it:** Five GCSEs, GNVQ Advanced in Leisure and Tourism (two years studied at school).

**At 14:** "I wanted to be an actress! I only decided to do Leisure and Tourism after GCSEs because I'm a big organiser. The course was based on a lot of practical and group work – I liked that. I wanted a challenge."

**Motivation to do a degree:** "I really enjoyed my GNVQ – it didn't put me off studying more. In fact, it had the opposite effect. By then I knew I didn't want to bore myself being in a job I always moaned about. With a degree, your possibilities seem to expand and suddenly you get more respect. The extra money isn't bad either."

**Student life:** "Was great! I cried the night before going because I was scared. But I made friends before I even moved into my room in halls – and I soon realised being able to do what you want, to decide for yourself, is brilliant!"

**Her job now:** "If people in the community want a new leisure centre or a skate park they come to me to help them raise money and sponsorship. I love the responsibility – people rely on me. I also work a lot on the website."

**Top tip:** "Don't give up. No one in my family had been to uni – my dad's an electrician and my mum's never really worked. I went to a comprehensive and all my friends got jobs at 16. I didn't mind because I couldn't wait to start a new life. In fact, the year I graduated, my brother went to college at 29. He said I inspired him!"





**Colin Brown, 23,  
Sunderland**

**Job:** Glass blower/  
designer

**Salary:** £14,000–  
£21,000

**Qualifications:** Studying  
a degree in 3D Design in  
Hot Glass at Sunderland  
University

**How he did it:** Seven GCSEs. Applied for an Advanced Apprenticeship at the National Glass Centre (NVQ Level 3). After three years, he went straight into the second year of his degree, doing two days a week at uni, and three days working at the Glass Centre.

**How it all started:** “Just before my GCSEs I went to my careers officer and when he mentioned glass blowing, I was like, ‘What?!’ I’d been thinking about doing something creative, but I’d never heard of glass blowing! Then I got here and thought: ‘This is... right.’”

**His work:** “Making anything from wine glasses, to bowls and vases for the Glass Centre’s shop. Every hour, the public are shown round the centre on a tour and I demonstrate how glass blowing works to them. I also teach during workshops we run.”

**Why an Apprenticeship?** “I wanted to work, study, experience stuff – and get paid for it. No one in my family went on to HE, so I wasn’t expected to do anything academically. But the more I got into it, the more I wanted to learn as much as I possibly could. My degree has taught me the art history side of the job.”

**Best bit:** “At work I have to make an object in one hour. At college I get to spend weeks on one design. That gives me the chance to develop my own style.”

**What you wish you’d known:** “That going to college and uni is nothing like school. It’s fun for a start! I stayed local so I know everyone! I found the writing assignments part hard – because I’m used to being practical. But whenever I get down, I think how lucky I am to be doing something that feels like a hobby!”

**Up next:** “Doing a Master’s degree. The more training you have, the better it looks. I love my job and want enough qualifications to make sure I can do it for the rest of my life.”

**Jessica Huie, 24,  
London**

**Job:** Press and public  
relations consultant/  
writer/radio broadcaster

**Salary:** £20,000–  
£35,000

**Qualifications:** BA Hons  
in Journalism at  
Middlesex University



**How she did it:** Five GCSEs (three were retakes), A level English Literature and Sociology.

**The path:** “I got easily distracted at school. I was dying to earn some money and be a grown up. I also used to believe black people didn’t go to university. No one in my family had ever been. I just couldn’t relate.”

**What changed her life:** “At 17, I got pregnant and gave up my A levels. When Monet was born, I got really depressed. A counsellor made me see that going back to college would let me control what I did with my life. When the revelation hit me I thought ‘I’ve got no time to lose’. Both my A levels were taken in one year at night school.”

**On uni:** “I had three full days on campus, and really got into my lectures. I liked that feeling of being good at something. I got a grant, which eased the worry of going into debt. It also gave me time to think about what I wanted to do and meet people I would never have done ordinarily.”

**On her big break:** “In my first year, I did work experience with Max Clifford and wrote for a magazine between lectures. I interviewed people like Beyoncé. After I graduated, Max Clifford offered me a job. Recently I left to set up my own company, JH Public Relations, though I still work for Max Clifford on a freelance basis. I also run my own greetings card company, Colorblind Cards. It gives me a massive buzz.”

**Ultimate ambition:** “To organise press coverage for a big event like the Brits. I also write for newspapers and do showbiz reports for radio, so I’m not tied to one route. I know I wouldn’t have got these opportunities without my degree.”

**Hero:** “My dad. He taught me you have to make goals for yourself, and that’s one of the reasons I am where I am.”





# SHOULD I? SHOULDN'T I?

You've got this far. If you want more advice to figure out what to do next, just ask...

## Top 5 (different!) courses...

- 1 Robotics and Artificial Intelligence
- 2 Watersports Studies
- 3 Wine Studies
- 4 Puppetry
- 5 Turf Grass Science

(Source: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). Click on 'Course search' to find out what they entail!)

## PEOPLE

Talk to your teachers, Connexions Personal Adviser, friends and family about your future.

## GENERAL

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm)

A government site designed to give you all the information you need on the choices for education available to you. Click on the different links for: exam help, career choices and HE options.

## COURSES AND CAREERS

[www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

Site for 13–19-year-olds offering information and advice on a wide range of topics.

[www.learndirect.co.uk](http://www.learndirect.co.uk)

Help in finding the right course to suit you. You can also call them on 0800 100 900.

[www.findfoundationdegree.co.uk](http://www.findfoundationdegree.co.uk)

[www.fdf.ac.uk](http://www.fdf.ac.uk)

Quick and easy access to basic info on Foundation Degrees including where you can study.

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

How much you get paid, for how long, and how to get started on one – find out how an Apprenticeship could work for you. Helpline: 08000 150 600.

[www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas](http://www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas)

Find out more about the new Diploma for 14–19-year-olds.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

[www.work-experience.org](http://www.work-experience.org)

For current placements on offer, the pros, cons and how to make the most out of work experience.

## UNIVERSITY LIFE

[www.studentuk.com](http://www.studentuk.com)

This site is run by students for students so expect the truth and nothing but – especially if you go into the chatroom. Offers advice on all the student issues you can think of.

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

Info on applying to HE, with a brilliant search on every course. You can now apply online for degree courses – and keep track of your application's progress.

Helpline: 0871 468 0 468.

[www.uni4me.com](http://www.uni4me.com)

For answers to all your questions about uni. How good your grades need to be, to what happens once you've sent in your application form. Plus: top tips on open days and making new friends. Click on video links for answers to all your worries about uni.

## HOW MUCH IT'LL COST

[www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

Loans, benefits and grants explained, how much you'll have to pay towards your tuition fees and how to apply for assistance.

## IF YOU'RE DISABLED

[www.disability.gov.uk](http://www.disability.gov.uk)

All your rights as a disabled person and help on offer. Helpline: 08457 622633. Also contact the Benefit Enquiry Line: 0800 243355.

## REMEMBER!

People might mock you for your decisions. You might get criticised. You will find it tough. But stick at studying, let nothing get into your way and there's no reason why you can't be where you want to be.

## GOOD LUCK!!!

For more information visit [www.direct.gov.uk/uni](http://www.direct.gov.uk/uni)

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