

27/04/2026

POST-16 OPTIONS AT A GLANCE

The government requires students to remain in some form of education or training until they are 18. Here are the main pathways:

1. A-Levels

- **What:** Academic qualifications focused on specific subjects (e.g., Maths, History, Biology).
- **Where:** Offered in sixth forms (attached to schools or colleges: Ludlow College, Hereford Sixth Form....).
- **Who:** Ideal for students aiming for university or academic careers.
- **Duration:** Two years, with exams at the end of Year 13. Some courses also involve NEA.

2. T-Levels

- **What:** New vocational qualifications introduced in 2020, focusing on technical skills in specific industries (e.g., Digital, Construction, Healthcare).
- **Where:** Available at colleges and selected sixth forms (Shrewsbury Colleges Group, Herefordshire, Hereford Sixth Form....)
- **Who:** For students who want a mix of classroom learning and practical experience.
- **Duration:** Two years, including an unpaid 45-day industry placement, usually sourced by the college.

3. Apprenticeships

- **What:** Paid work, usually 4 days a week, at national minimum wage. This is combined with on-the-job training and study toward a qualification. The apprentice is required to find an employer. 1 day a week is usually spent studying at college. Occasionally, the college tutor / assessor will visit the apprentice in the workplace in place of college study.
- **Where:** Employers and training providers (colleges or independent institutions: HWGTA, SBC, some local employers. Keep an eye on Facebook and Indeed)
- **Who:** Suitable for students who want to earn while they learn in a specific trade or profession.
- **Levels:** Vary from intermediate (Level 2, equivalent to GCSEs) to advanced (Level 3, equivalent to A-Levels) and higher/degree apprenticeships.

4. Vocational Courses

- **What:** Practical, career-focused qualifications (e.g., BTECs, NVQs).
- **Where:** Further Education (FE) colleges and some schools (Holme Lacy, Shrewsbury...Ludlow College no longer runs vocational courses.)
- **Who:** For students aiming to enter specific careers or gain skills for further training.
- **Examples:** Hospitality, IT, Engineering, Creative Arts, Health and Social Care, Early Years.

5. Traineeships

- **What:** Short-term courses with work experience to help young people transition into apprenticeships or employment.
- **Where:** Colleges, training providers, or employers.
- **Who:** Targeted at students who need additional skills or qualifications to secure an apprenticeship or job.
- **Duration:** Up to 6 months.

6. Specialist Schools or Colleges

- **What:** Institutions focusing on specific skills, such as performing arts, sports, or agriculture.
- **Who:** Students with clear career aspirations in these areas.
- **Examples:** Music conservatoires or sports academies.

7. Employment with Training

- **What:** Part-time work combined with part-time study toward qualifications.
- **Where:** Arranged with employers and training providers.
- **Requirement:** Must lead to a recognized qualification (e.g., an NVQ).

8. Armed Forces

- **What:** Training and education options within military roles.
 - **Where:** Joining military colleges or enrolling in armed forces apprenticeships.
 - **Who:** Students interested in a military career.
-

9. Home Education

- **What:** Continuing education from home with parents or tutors, including online learning platforms.
 - **Who:** Students who prefer an alternative approach or have specific needs. Ideal for those who are particularly talented in a specific field, e.g. sport, dance. This pathway allows the student to dedicate the necessary amount of time needed to excel in their field of expertise, while studying.
-

GCSE Maths and English: If you achieve a Grade 3 in English Language or Maths, government policy requires you to continue studying these subjects when you leave school, as a Grade 4 is the minimum for a standard pass.

You must be aware that achieving a grade 3 in GCSE English and Maths makes entry to university difficult, as most undergraduate courses require a grade 4 or 5. However, you can still go to university by resitting these subjects, taking an Access to HE course, or applying for a 1 year Foundation degree, before going on to study your chosen degree.

You can take Functional Skills if:

- You achieved Grade 2 or lower in your Maths/English/both GCSE
- Your college / training provider assesses it as more appropriate for you.

A-Levels

- Colleges may stipulate a minimum grade at GCSE to be accepted to study it at A-Level, e.g. at least a Grade 7 in GCSE Maths to be accepted to study it at A-Level.
- Each student will have a post-16 careers appointment with a qualified in-school Adviser. Some students will be offered more than 1 opportunity. In Y10 and Y11, there will be sessions, workshops, assemblies and trips designed to offer a taste of all the post-16 pathway options available.