

2019

Edition 4

TARGET
careers

**FUTURE
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**Paths to
Professional
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a Parent's Guide

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 Tel +44 (0)1491 826262
 www.groupgti.com

Printer
 Stephens & George
 ISBN: 978 1 912625 11 6
 ISSN: 2516-4546

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Helping your child stay on track

How to guide your child along their career journey.

‘When you and your child are searching for the right university, ask about mentoring programmes, international exchange opportunities, internships, scholarships and awards. These can build their confidence, give them a competitive advantage when applying for jobs, and can even be life changing!’

Lynne Russell,
communications manager,
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

‘Familiarise your child with the different channels and routes available, such as online employability tools, schools’ careers departments and the National Careers Service. Teach them to be inquisitive and ask the right questions when networking. Most importantly, help them be aware of their strengths and the values they can bring to an employer.’

Jen Schneider,
early in career resourcing lead, BDO

‘The world of work has changed from when I started my career to today, and will change again for my children. So, as a parent, I need to stop being so old school in my thinking and encourage them to look at the range of opportunities out there today that will enable them to succeed in their future.’

Brian Sinclair,
early careers talent acquisition manager,
Fidelity International

‘Organisations recruiting apprentices look for the transferable skills and knowledge young people have started to develop. Help your child make links between their interests, experiences (good and bad) and what excites them to find the right opportunity.’

Mel Davis,
apprenticeship manager, Virgin Media

‘Support your child to explore all the options available. Opportunities for young people nowadays are incredible and whether they choose a gap year, an apprenticeship, the university route or something completely different, all of these will set them up for a very bright future.’

Kelly Markwick,
UK and Ireland early professional engagement & attraction lead, IBM

Career choices

– taking the first steps

Considering a wide range of options will help your child decide which direction they'd like to head in.

Some people know from an early age that they want to be a doctor or a journalist. But what if your child isn't sure? You might find it helpful to work through the following pointers with them.

1. Find their motivation

It's important for your child to be motivated by their career choice, both in terms of working to get the grades they need and progressing their career once they start work.

Encourage them to think about what's important to them in life. Money? Helping people? Being creative? This may help to guide their research into careers.

Their interests can be another useful starting point. If your child is a Formula 1 fan, would they enjoy designing cars as an automotive engineer? If they like to hit the shops at the weekend, how about a career managing a store – or even a whole chain?

Also consider with your child which subjects they are good at and what other skills they have. Perhaps they are good at speaking in front of large groups of people or working out and sticking to a budget. Keep these skills in mind when reading about different jobs.

2. Learn what's required

Many careers are open to young people regardless of the subjects they've studied for

their A levels, Scottish Highers or undergraduate degree. This is often (but not always) the case in areas such as business, finance, law and the media. So it's fine if your child doesn't feel ready to decide yet or wants to change path later on.

However, some careers do require a particular degree or vocational training path, and often specific subject choices for A levels/Scottish Highers too. This tends to be the case in areas such as science, medicine and engineering. So it's a good idea for your child to start thinking about careers now, so they can make subject choices that leave open doors to careers that might appeal. Encourage them to work through the careers that *do* require particular subjects and decide whether they are happy to rule them out or want to keep these options open.

3. Look beyond the stereotypes

Encourage your child to take a quick look at as many career areas as possible, rather than instantly ruling any out on the basis of stereotypes or assumptions. Plenty of engineers wear suits and go to business meetings – and engineering employers are very keen to hire more women. Many IT professionals spend more time talking to clients about their needs than they do writing code. Lots of lawyers have jobs that don't require them to defend people accused of unpleasant crimes.

4. Be wary of 'safe' choices

Take care if your child is considering an option because they think it is a 'safe choice' or a 'good job', rather than out of intrinsic interest. IT and law, for example, have a 'solid' image but it may be harder than you think for your child to get their first job and not all roles will offer a high salary. Trading in an academic or vocational path your child will enjoy for assumptions about a 'guaranteed good job' is likely to lead to disappointment.

5. Take a closer look

Got a shortlist? Find out more with online research. Then try networking. You and your child can ask your family and friends if they have any good contacts, attend university open days and school leaver job fairs, and look for employers who are willing to offer work experience. ©

More help from TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE

- To get lots more help with choosing a career, head to targetcareers.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-your-career.
- Read overviews of careers in 14 key areas at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors.
- Find out which careers need certain degrees by visiting targetcareers.co.uk/uni/choices-about-uni.






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Getting their bearings – an apprenticeship route map

Use this information to help you and your child navigate the world of work-based opportunities for school leavers.

Apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and sponsored degrees usually involve working for an employer and studying for relevant qualifications, although exactly how your child's time is split between the two will depend on the scheme and the employer.

Bear in mind that different organisations refer to their opportunities in slightly different ways, so it's important to look beyond the name of the opportunity and find

out the specifics of what the employer is offering, such as qualifications and pay. You can find out more about what to research with your child on page 22.

Apprenticeship levels explained

There is an official national framework for apprenticeships that sets out four types of apprenticeship, each offering qualifications at different levels:

- Intermediate (level 2) apprenticeships are equivalent to GCSEs.



- Advanced (level 3) is equal to A levels.
- Higher (levels 4 and 5) leads to a qualification that is equivalent to a higher education certificate, higher education diploma or a foundation degree.
- Degree (levels 6 and 7) results in a bachelors or masters degree.

This framework is set and regulated by the government – an opportunity must meet specific criteria to be able to call itself an apprenticeship.

Higher and degree apprenticeships are typically open to applicants with A levels or equivalent qualifications (such as Scottish Highers, an advanced apprenticeship or an NVQ level 3).

An apprentice will typically attend college or university either one day a week (day release) or for a week or more at a time (block release). The cost of an apprenticeship – and any tuition fees – will be entirely covered by the employer and the government.

Scheme lengths vary; the higher the qualification involved, the longer the scheme will be. Higher and degree apprenticeships typically last between three and five years. Employers don't tend to guarantee that there will be a job at the end of it but in practice they are typically keen to keep employees on.

School leaver programmes explained

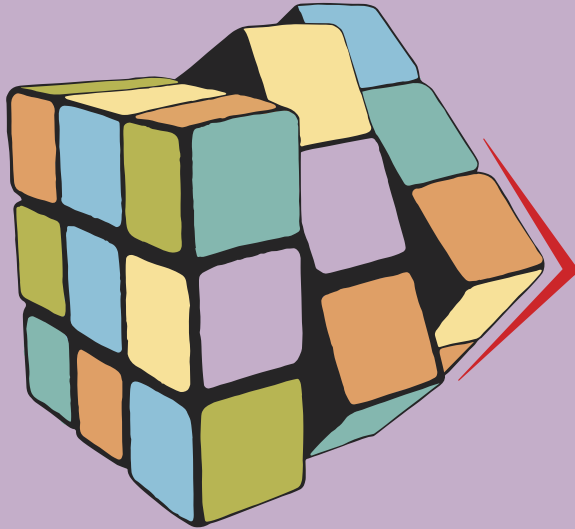
School leaver programmes are normally aimed at those with A levels (or equivalent). Unlike an apprenticeship, a school leaver programme doesn't need to fit a set framework, so the term can be used to describe a broad range of programmes that combine earning and learning, with tuition fees covered by the employer. However, some employers may call their scheme a school leaver programme when it is technically an apprenticeship.

School leaver programmes are quite often available with employers in accountancy and related areas. An accountancy school leaver programme typically involves studying for professional qualifications that are designed to qualify school leavers as chartered accountants. Participants tend to end up with the same professional qualifications that graduates joining the organisation would work towards – and in some cases they achieve this at a younger age. Programmes tend to last around five years. You can find out more about how to get into finance on page 36.

Sponsored degrees explained

There are two types of sponsored degrees. The first (known as a degree apprenticeship) operates in a similar way to higher apprenticeships and school leaver programmes: your child will work for their employer, earn a wage, study for a degree part time (either by attending a local university or through distance learning) and have their tuition fees paid for them. Their degree is typically chosen by the employer – and it may even play a part in designing the course content.

The second type is where an employer offers partial financial support to students who are attending university full time in the traditional way and are studying a subject that relates to the employer's business. Typically, the student will complete paid work with the employer during university vacations. They may also be required to work for the sponsor for a minimum period after graduation. This form of sponsored degree is most frequently provided by engineering companies (find out more about how to get into engineering on page 42). ©



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Is work or university the best fit for my child?

What would suit your child most: a traditional university experience or earning while learning? Here are the main factors to consider.



What is life on a school leaver programme like, and how does it compare to going to university full-time? Once you and your child have got a sense of what to expect from the different experiences on offer, your child will be able to make the best choice for them.

Options for independent living

If your child decides to go to university in the traditional sense, they are likely to share a house or flat with other students and be responsible for buying and cooking their own food, washing clothes and paying bills. This introduces them to living independently, while allowing them to share the experience with others in the same position. However, moving away is not essential if your child attends a university close enough to home to commute on a daily basis.

A school leaver programme might be too far away for your child to commute, requiring them to leave home. Even if it isn't, there's still the option for your child to move out if they want to, as they will probably be earning enough to pay rent. They might be able to share accommodation with other apprentices, but there's no guarantee that they'll be living with people their own age. Are they ready for that level of independence?

Some programmes include placements based in different locations or short overnight trips (find out more on page 23), while some university courses allow students to study abroad as part of their degree.

Academic freedom or practical results?

Most degrees give your child the freedom to choose which topics they study, especially in their final year. Many courses also include a project or dissertation, allowing them to focus on the aspects that they are most passionate about. The main outcome of a piece of work (eg an essay) will be a grade. Will this be sufficient reward or would your child prefer to see their work having a positive impact on other people or on a business? Vocational courses, which may include laboratory sessions or work placements, provide more opportunities for students to apply what they've learned to real-world situations, but even these aim to develop a student's understanding of a subject from an academic or theoretical rather than a practical perspective.

On a school leaver programme, as with any job, your child's day-to-day work will have a clear purpose that helps their employer work towards its business goals. They may see their work have an impact on clients and possibly even on profits. If your child's school leaver programme includes a degree, the topics they study will be chosen by their employer and relate to their working life. Would your child enjoy being able to apply what they're learning to their job or would they appreciate the freedom to study what they like?

Flexibility or structure?

Universities typically expect students to spend around 35 to 45 hours a week studying. Science subjects tend to have



around 20 contact hours a week, and arts subjects even fewer, meaning that most of your child's time will be spent in private study. It's up to your child how much time they commit, as there is less direct supervision than at school. Would your child be motivated to crack on by themselves? Equally, they might value having control over their schedule and the flexibility to pop round to friends' rooms for a cuppa or stay up late without an early start for work the next day.

School leaver programmes and higher apprenticeship tend to have more of a nine-to-five structure. Your child may benefit from this, as their time is usually all theirs once each shift is finished, and it offers a clear distinction between work, study and other areas of their life. However, if the programme involves working towards a degree or professional qualification, they will attend sessions at college or university during work hours but may also need to study at home in their own time – especially close to exams.

Socialising and trying new things

As a full-time student your child would mix largely with people of their own age. There would be opportunities to socialise with people they live with, people on the same course and those they meet through extracurricular activities. Universities have lots of opportunities to get involved in sport, theatre, politics, fundraising and media. Societies allow your child to meet people with common interests or try something completely new. However, at busy times of the year your child may need to spend less time on these activities so they can study more.

On a school leaver programme your child would have colleagues of all ages. There

would still be the chance to meet others of the same age, though – both at work and while studying for qualifications. If your child prefers working in a group, they might be happier interacting with colleagues everyday than studying independently. A school leaver programme might not allow your child much free time during the week, but they will usually have weekends free to catch up with friends or pursue hobbies. If they do need to work at weekends, they will get time off during the week instead. Some employers run clubs and activities or, alternatively, your child might be able to find a club in the local area that interests them.

Work experience and keeping options open

Going to university in the traditional way allows your child to explore a wide variety of career options before making a decision. Students can get work experience during vacations, fit part-time jobs or volunteering around their studies, try career-related activities on campus and make use of the careers service. Some courses incorporate a year in industry, while others include work placements that students attend on certain days each week. A lot of graduate jobs don't require students to have studied a particular subject, so your child won't be limited to one career after graduating. However, some jobs do require a specific degree. Your child should find out whether this is the case if they have a strong interest in a particular career.

School leaver programmes provide excellent work experience in their particular field. Many will train your child for a specific job, but some will give them the chance to experience different areas of the business. If your child doesn't know what career they

want, or has several different ideas, then a school leaver programme is probably not for them. If the programme includes a degree, then this will be transferable to other careers – however, your child may be asked to explain why they chose to train in one career and apply for jobs in another. Qualifications below degree level are less likely to help if your child wants to change career completely. It's also worth checking whether your child is expected to work for the company for a set period of time after finishing the programme. ©

More help from **TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE**

- See targetcareers.co.uk/uni/choices-about-uni for which careers do and don't require a specific degree.
- For more information on whether university or a school leaver programme would suit your child best, go to targetcareers.co.uk/careers-advice/work-v-uni.



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Chris – Technology Apprentice

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Which path is best financially?

A school leaver programme allows your child to avoid student debt, but can they earn as much as a graduate overall?

There's no 'one size fits all' answer to the question of whether school leavers will be better off financially if they go to university full time or join an employer at 18 on a higher apprenticeship or other school leaver programme. It depends on the career they want to get into and the particular courses or programmes they are considering.

Earnings v. debt

If your child goes to university, they are likely to leave with student debt, which will then accrue interest. Student Finance, which is linked to the government, offers two types of student loan: one for tuition fees, which is paid directly to the university, and a maintenance loan to help cover living costs. The total amount your child repays will depend on how quickly they pay it off and whether they have paid back all their debt 30 years after they graduate (at which point any remaining debt is written off).

Repayment will be deducted from your child's monthly wage once they're earning over a certain amount: currently £25,000 or more in England and Wales and £18,330 or more in Scotland and Northern Ireland. They will not need to pay anything while they're earning less than this. The more your child earns during their working life, the more they'll pay back – so the amount

they pay for their degree will be more or less in line with the financial benefit they gain from it.

See our advice on 'University fees and funding' at targetcareers.co.uk/uni/choices-about-uni.

Thinking long term

Would your child have been better or worse off financially if they had started full-time work sooner instead of going to university? If they'd managed to get a place on a school leaver programme that got them to the same earning level as graduates in the same length of time – and that was as good for their career in the long term – then they'd have been better off not going to university. This is often the case with employers who offer the chance to do a degree part time while working. Examples in finance include Barclays' higher apprenticeship in leadership and management and PwC's Flying Start degree programmes. Examples in IT include CGI's and IBM's degree apprenticeships.

However, not all school leaver programmes are designed to put them on a par with graduates. In these cases they might find that in the long term they will earn less than those with a degree. Make sure your child's research includes finding out about the qualifications they need to progress long term. For example, in engineering, if they eventually want to become a chartered engineer (the >>



highest level of qualification), it's easiest if they have a masters degree (see page 42 for more on getting into engineering). Also check whether any professional qualifications offered to school leavers are the same as those taken by the organisation's graduate recruits.

Ignore 'average' salaries

It's wise not to get too fixated on statistics relating to average salaries for all graduates or school leavers. Media reports about how much graduates earn often don't give the full story about their figures (see page 30 for

more information). And salaries vary so much, particularly for graduates, that averages aren't much help in predicting what your child personally might earn.

Take a look instead at our 'How much will I earn?' articles for the career sectors of interest on [targetcareers.co.uk](https://www.targetcareers.co.uk), which will give you a feel for graduate and school leaver programme salaries in different industries.

Also, remember that school leavers start working at a younger age and may have had several pay rises by the time graduates of the same age join the company. ©

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Testing the waters – how your child can gain experience

Encourage your child to dip their feet into the professional world and find out what different careers involve before diving in head first.



Work experience will help your child learn about the different careers that interest them and what they do and don't enjoy.

It will also help them to:

- develop the skills that employers and universities value, such as communication, teamwork and time management
- experience what working life is like
- increase their confidence, independence and professionalism
- enhance their employability and boost their CV, university personal statement and job applications
- meet people who could help them in their future career – and they may find a potential future employer. ☺

Formal work experience opportunities

- **Work experience placements.** Often lasting up to a week at a company, arranged by your child's school/college or independently. Many large employers, including EY, Sky, HSBC and Rolls-Royce, advertise opportunities on their websites and targetcareers.co.uk. Your child (under your supervision) can also approach smaller, local businesses over the phone or by email to say they'd be interested in a few days' work experience, check if this is possible and ask about the preferred way of applying. You should follow your child's school/college's safeguarding guidelines – they will also have a list of approved employers.
- **Work shadowing.** Your child will observe one person to gain insight into their job, usually just for a day. These opportunities aren't advertised, so professionals will need to be approached directly. If any of your family, friends or

neighbours work in an area your child is interested in, you could ask if they'd be willing to help.

- **Employers' insight days or weeks for school leavers.** Some employers offer students the chance to spend a day or more seeing for themselves what working there would be like. They may also get some handy tips on the application for its school leaver programme. You can look for upcoming events on targetcareers.co.uk and employers' careers websites.
- **School leaver careers fairs and employer events.** Careers fairs allow students to meet lots of employers in one go and ask questions. An event run by one employer will give your child a deeper insight into that organisation, for example via an open evening at its offices.

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Make decisions on
subject choices.

Understand how their
strengths, interests and
personality fit together.

Consider university
options and alternatives
to higher education.



Find out more at targetcareers.co.uk/futurewise

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Other activities that count as work experience

Beyond formal work experience, there are lots of options that can help your child develop useful skills and get a feel for what they enjoy. They may even be taking part in some of these activities already.

- **Volunteering and fundraising.** Your child could volunteer at a charity shop, help with outdoor conservation projects, become a volunteer police cadet or take part in the National Citizen Service. Find out more about opportunities for young people at #iwill and vInspired.
- **Extracurricular activities.** These include: being part of a sports team or other club; taking part in a theatre production; writing for a student newspaper; joining the school debating society; being a Scout or Guide; and completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- **Competitions.** Encourage your child to research whether there are competitions in areas that interest them, for example in design, writing, photography, maths, engineering or business.
- **Part-time jobs.** Your child could try their hand at babysitting or a paper round, get a part-time job in a supermarket or café at the weekend or look for a temporary job in the holidays. Attractions such as zoos and garden centres often hire more staff for the summer.
- **Personal projects.** If your child has designed and made something themselves, such as a DIY project, website or blog, they may well have developed the problem-solving and creative skills that employers look for. Another option is learning a language independently.
- **Positions of responsibility.** These could include being a head boy or head girl, sports captain, house captain, school council member, peer mentor or having a leadership or committee role in a club.
- **Summer school.** Several universities run these, usually for up to a week. It can help your child build their knowledge of a subject and decide whether they'd enjoy studying it full time – and whether they'd enjoy university life. Summer schools are quite common for science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. You can find out more on universities' websites and via The Sutton Trust, Pathways to Property and Headstart.

Researching employers' programmes – dig out the facts

Where can you and your child learn more about school leaver programmes, and what information should you look out for?

If your child is thinking of joining an employer to 'earn and learn', you'll want to research the schemes they are considering. Make sure before you start that your child knows what career they want, so they can assess whether the programmes available are appropriate routes.

Sources of information

You can find basic details of programmes online, for example on targetcareers.co.uk and employers' own websites. Also ask your friends and family if anyone has a contact at the company in question with whom you and your child could have an informal chat.

Some employers attend careers fairs or hold open days. Here you can speak to recruiters and, often, employees on the relevant programme. Parents are usually welcome, but remember to take a backseat and let your child do the talking. There's advice on how to make the most of such events at targetcareers.co.uk (click on 'Careers advice' then 'Building networks'). You can find details of open days on the careers pages of employers' websites and the box opposite lists some fairs.

Qualifications offered

Find out what qualifications your child would gain. Use targetcareers.co.uk to assess whether these would get your child into the right career

at the right level – go to 'Career sectors', then choose the relevant area.

There is a national framework for apprenticeships that defines the level of qualifications on offer (see page 7). However, there is no such framework for other school leaver programmes. Some employers offer school leavers the chance to study for professional qualifications that are also taken by their graduate recruits, such as the ACA qualification from ICAEW. Professional qualifications certify that you have the training and skills needed to do your job to a high standard; in some industries such as accounting they are essential to progress your career. Check the detail of what is on offer carefully.

If a degree is mentioned, double check whether it is a full bachelors degree (if this is important to you or your child). Sometimes a foundation degree is included instead, which is the equivalent of two thirds of a standard university degree.

As good as a graduate?

It's worth asking how, once your child has finished the programme, their career prospects would compare with those of a graduate recruit. Would they be doing the same kind of work? How would their salary compare with that of a graduate of the same age? Would your child's prospects for career

progression and promotion be the same as a graduate's? You're unlikely to find this information online, so ask in person at careers fairs or open days.

Support available

Investigate what support would be available. Is there a buddy system or mentoring scheme? Would there be help with finding accommodation or with the cost of relocation? Does the employer have groups or activities that could help your child to make friends, such as clubs, regular social events, an LGBTQ+ group or a women's network?

Travel required

Depending on their role, your child may be expected to travel frequently. For example, they might visit different offices or clients while maintaining a regular base, or move round different parts of the country to complete the programme. Make sure your child is happy with the amount of travel involved and the logistics of combining this with time at college or university. Check also whether the costs of travel are met by the employer. Again, this is information that you're likely to have to gather in person.

About the contract

Typically recruiters do not guarantee that employees will be kept on at the end of the programme; however, in practice they

usually want to keep them. Be aware of whether your child would be offered a permanent or fixed-term contract initially but don't reject opportunities on this basis.


Do take note of whether there is a 'tie-in' period after training has ended. You may also want to investigate what would happen if your child were to drop out of the scheme part-way through (for example whether they would have to repay any training costs), though it might be safest to leave this until your child has a job offer. ©

Careers fairs

There are lots of careers fairs held around the country. The following will help you get started.

- www.worldskillsuk.org
- www.nationalapprenticeshipshow.org
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* The Graduate Market in 2018-2019 report High Fliers Research

** Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey 2017

Researching degree courses – leave no stone unturned

When comparing universities with your child, consider these questions to help them pick the most suitable courses to apply for.

Once your child knows what degree subject they would like to study, it's worth drawing up a shortlist of universities that they are interested in. You can then do some further research with your child to narrow this list down. They can apply to a maximum of five courses via UCAS. Degrees in the same subject can differ between universities, so look into each course in as much detail as possible.

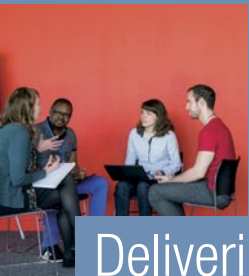
You might not be able to find all of the following information on the university's website. If you can't, you or your child could contact the relevant course admissions tutor or ask in person at an open day.

Researching courses

- What content is covered? Does this match your child's interests?
- Do the lecturers' backgrounds and research areas tie in with the topics your child wants to learn about?
- How many hours of contact time are there each week and how is this divided up (eg into lectures, tutorials and/or lab sessions)?
- How many hours of study are students recommended to do by themselves each week? If your child is planning to work part time, could they fit this in?
- Are students assessed by coursework, exams or both, and what proportion of their final grade does each element count for?
- What are the student satisfaction ratings for the course?
- What jobs have past students gone on to do?
- How much are the tuition fees and are there any extra costs?
- What are the relevant department's ratings for research and teaching quality?
- Is the course taught at one of the university's main locations or further afield?
- Are there any opportunities to study abroad for part of their degree? >>



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Questions about vocational degrees

- Is the course accredited by a relevant professional body?
- Which employers do past students now work for?
- What percentage of graduates find work in the relevant industry?
- What links does the course have to employers? Are there opportunities to meet them, get sponsored by them or do work placements with them?
- What modules are included? Do these relate to your child's career interests?
- Have any of the lecturers worked in the relevant industry?

Researching universities

- How highly ranked is the university overall?
- How employable are its students? What facilities and initiatives does it have to help them become more employable?
- Where is it located? How much would it cost to live there and would the university provide accommodation?
- How long would it take your child to get home for a visit or to commute if they plan to live at home?
- Does the university have clubs and societies that relate to their outside interests – or could they find these elsewhere locally?
- Does the local area have the facilities they want?

Visiting universities

Encourage your child to visit universities and departments to meet or listen to the academics who would be teaching them and current students. Are people welcoming? Do they sound passionate about their subject? Open days and taster courses are a good chance to do this. You can find out more about taster courses on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com). Parents can usually attend open days with their children, but encourage your child to speak for themselves.

Have a good wander round to see the facilities – labs, lecture halls, libraries etc – and what the atmosphere is like. Head further afield to explore the local area. Would your child feel at home?

Impressing graduate recruiters

Knowing what employers like in their graduate recruits could also help your child's decision.

- Some recruiters prefer prestigious universities. So investigate higher-ranked institutions if your child is predicted good grades, but find one where they will feel inspired and supported.
- Almost all recruiters want graduates to have taken part in activities outside of their degree. So consider whether a university has clubs or volunteering programmes that your child would like to join. If they plan to live at home they might be best at a university that doesn't require a long daily commute so they have time for other interests. ☺

More help from TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE

Go to targetcareers.co.uk/uni where you'll find:

- a university course search
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- city guides
- help on applying to university via UCAS
- degree subject guides
- university reviews – find out what current students think about their universities
- a Degree Explorer tool to help your child discover which subjects they might enjoy studying.



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Five myths about degrees and employment prospects

Make sure your child doesn't take a wrong turn if they are investigating university courses on the basis of likely career prospects.

Don't believe everything you hear about graduates' chances of getting a job. We've put together our top five myths to guide you through the maze.

MYTH ONE: arts degrees won't get you a job

Truth: An arts degree is a good start to a broad range of careers. Some graduate jobs require a particular subject or range of subjects (eg a numerate degree or a science degree) but many roles are open to graduates of any subject. There are also conversion courses for graduates who want to change direction after their degree.

Many employers ask for at least a 2.1 (the second highest degree grade). So if your child wants to join, say, a big accountancy firm after they graduate – a route that is open to graduates of all subjects but typically requires a 2.1 – they would be far better off with a 2.1 in English than a 2.2 in maths or economics.

MYTH TWO: a sensible subject is better than one you will enjoy

Truth: As per myth one, academic success is a big factor in employability. Getting good grades requires motivation, and it's far easier to stay motivated about something that interests you. >>

At university, it is students' own responsibility to turn up to lectures and study independently, with no-one checking up on them. If your child chooses a subject they enjoy, they will be less likely to neglect their studies.

MYTH THREE: vocational degrees lead straight to a job

Truth: There's sometimes a mismatch in expectations as to what a vocational degree will provide. Students can assume that it will focus on the skills employers seek; their lecturers may view it as an academic background to an area.

Employers typically favour graduates who have experience outside of their degree, gained through work experience or extracurricular activities, even if their course was vocational. A media recruiter, for example, is likely to be far more impressed by a history graduate who edited a section of a student magazine and has taken work placements with local newspapers than a journalism graduate who hasn't.

Different industries' recruitment needs vary according to the state of the economy. Outsourcing can take jobs abroad, while recruitment caps can be brought in in public sector roles. An area that's booming when a student applies for their degree might not be once they finish their studies.

MYTH FOUR: studying IT almost guarantees employment

Truth: Each year the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey reports what graduates are doing six months after finishing their degrees. The subject with consistently the highest unemployment rate for those with an undergraduate degree is computer science

(the unemployment rate was 9.4% in the 2018/19 survey). That's not to say that there aren't plenty of jobs available for IT graduates with good grades and extracurricular experience – just that even such a useful-sounding subject won't guarantee you a job.

MYTH FIVE: the average graduate starting salary is £30,000

Truth: The press love to report on surveys that suggest high graduate starting salaries. Regularly quoted reports include *The Graduate Market* (from High Fliers) and the biannual surveys from the Institute of Student Employers (ISE). The former predicted an average graduate starting salary of £30,000 for 2018, while the ISE *Annual Survey*, published in September 2018, reported an average of £28,250.

However, they are based largely on salaries from the biggest, highest-paying employers, not from all organisations offering graduate jobs. For example, the 138 ISE members who responded to the ISE survey offered 32,202 graduate jobs in 2017/18, while around 300,000 graduates leave university each year, meaning that only around ten per cent of graduates will land one of these roles.

A more accurate salary picture comes from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey, which is based on universities contacting all of their graduates. This found that graduates who left university in 2017 with an undergraduate degree and were in full-time jobs six months later earned an average of £22,399. ©



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Helping your child apply for apprenticeships

Deavon Sinclair is the schools and further education coordinator at the Construction Youth Trust, a partner of the CITB.



When your child is applying for school leaver opportunities, try to be supportive without being pushy. It's about engaging with your child throughout the process – don't take the lead, but make sure they know they can come to you for help. If they ask you to review their application form, take time to go through it together and, if required, help them understand how they can express themselves better. If they'd like help preparing for interviews, you could pretend to be the recruiter and ask them some commonly asked interview questions. Google the STAR technique for a structure your child could use to respond to interview questions, and, where you can, keep it light-hearted to help your child relax. You could film them and watch the video together afterwards to see how they could improve.

Seek advice from other sources

Supporting your child doesn't have to mean getting involved directly. If you don't feel you can answer all your child's questions (eg if you don't have enough knowledge of spelling and grammar to confidently check their CV), don't worry. Find out what organisations exist in your local area that could provide guidance – I suggest you try the careers advisers at your child's school in the first instance. What matters is that you show your child you have an interest in their career.

Take an active interest

Your child will find it easier to demonstrate their interest in a company if they understand what it does and what makes it different from competitors. When they talk about an organisation they want to apply to, ask questions such as 'What kind of projects have they been involved with?' and 'Why do you want to join them?'.

Work experience and extracurricular activities are worth mentioning in applications and interviews, even if they're in an area that seems unrelated to the role being applied for. I've worked with 16–18 year olds who thought they hadn't got any work experience until I asked them 'What do you do on a Saturday?' or 'How long have you had this part-time job for?'. By having these conversations you can help your child think about what they've achieved and draw out examples of skills that employers seek, such as problem solving and teamwork.

Encourage your child to keep trying

The competitive nature of apprenticeship applications means there's a high chance your child will be unsuccessful for a number of the positions they apply for. Encourage them not to take rejection personally and to keep on trying. Remind them that there will always be other options and that you'll be there to support them no matter what. ☺



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How to get into finance

Find out about routes into accountancy, banking and insurance.

There are two routes into most finance careers. Your child could go to university full time and then apply for a graduate job, or join an employer after their A levels or equivalent and start earning while they learn. In both cases there are opportunities to gain professional qualifications (and these are essential if your child wants to become an accountant or an actuary).

Many finance employers offer internships for university students, which can sometimes lead to a graduate job offer, though other work experience is also welcomed. Along with minimum A level requirements for apprenticeships and graduate programmes, companies normally ask for five GCSEs (or equivalent) at grade C or above, including maths and English.

Accountancy

Whichever route your child chooses, once they've started their job they'll work towards qualifying as a chartered accountant. Most school leaver programmes last five years, although some only last four. The first two years are spent working towards a basic qualification or certificate; the following two or three towards a professional qualification. Some firms offer a combined degree and professional qualification programme – these usually take four to six years. Accountancy firms seek good academic grades (eg 112 UCAS points*).

Graduates usually take about three years to qualify as chartered accountants after being hired. They generally need a 2.1 degree (the second highest grade), but some accountancy firms will accept a 2.2 (the third highest grade). Arts degrees are as welcome as

numerate degrees (degrees with a high concentration of maths), though there's often a numeracy test as part of the application process. Most employers want good grades (eg 112 UCAS points*).

Insurance and actuarial work

A number of insurance companies and related organisations (such as the insurance market Lloyd's) offer apprenticeships. These typically require 96 to 120 UCAS points* depending on the employer. Most insurance graduate programmes request a 2.1 degree in any subject and some have a minimum requirement for A levels or equivalent (eg 112 UCAS points*). No specific professional qualifications are needed to work in insurance, but both apprentices and graduates often have the opportunity to gain a qualification from a professional body such as the Chartered Insurance Institute.



A few companies recruit school leavers onto apprenticeships in actuarial science, which is closely related to insurance and involves calculating the risk of something happening. These programmes typically require 104 to 136 UCAS points* with at least grade B in maths A level (or equivalent). Actuarial graduate programmes require a 2.1 degree – a numerate subject is normally preferred – as well as grade B in maths A level (or equivalent) and 112 to 136 UCAS points*.

Trainee actuaries must study for internationally recognised professional actuarial exams with the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA). Both graduates and those who have entered through an apprenticeship route can qualify as actuaries in this way. Apprentices will sometimes study a lower-level qualification (such as certified actuarial analyst) during their apprenticeship and then move onto the IFoA qualifications in their next role after the apprenticeship has finished.

Banking and investment

Several banks' retail and corporate divisions hire school leavers onto higher apprenticeships.

Recruiters typically ask for 80 to 112 UCAS points* and may also seek customer service experience. Graduate programmes in retail and corporate banking typically require applicants to have a 2.1 in any subject, and some request a minimum number of UCAS points (normally between 112 and 128)*. However, some retail banks welcome applications from graduates with a 2.2.

To get into investment banking, applicants usually need a university degree at a 2.1 or above and around 128 UCAS points*. The degree can be in any subject but there is often a numeracy test as part of the application process. A relevant internship is a must.

There are both graduate and school leaver opportunities in investment management. A few firms offer apprenticeships, which typically require at least 96 UCAS points*. Graduate programmes in investment management typically require a degree in any subject at 2.1 or above, and some have minimum A level (or equivalent) requirements: 128 UCAS points*, for example. ©

* This is based on the new UCAS points system introduced in September 2017.



More help from TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/finance for the following:

- an overview of job roles and employers in the finance industry
- information on professional qualifications in accountancy, actuarial work, insurance and investment management
- advice on choosing a university and a degree if your child wants a finance career
- typical salaries in finance
- an interview with an actuarial apprentice.



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How to get into business

Investigate routes into HR, sales, marketing, PR or consulting.

The term ‘business’ is very broad, so here we’re focusing on HR, sales, marketing, PR and management consulting. It’s possible to get into these careers without taking a traditional degree, for example via a higher or degree apprenticeship (see page 7). Employers generally ask for two or three A levels (or equivalent). Some set minimum grades or UCAS points, typically between 80 and 120*. Some programmes offer the chance to try different business areas via a series of placements: marketing, HR and sales are common options, though PR and management consulting placements are rare. For most other opportunities, and for most graduate schemes, applicants need to know which specific area interests them.

HR

Degree apprenticeships or higher apprenticeships are an option. Alternatively, some entry-level

jobs are open to non-graduates, though office administration experience is often needed first.

A number of HR graduate schemes are open to those with any degree subject, though others ask for a relevant degree (eg business studies). In many cases applicants need a 2.1 (the second highest grade) though some employers accept a 2.2 (the third highest grade). Some organisations don’t run formal graduate schemes but do have entry-level HR jobs that graduates can apply for.

Sales

A number of higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships offer the opportunity to work in a sales role. There are also entry-level and trainee roles available, for example in media sales or recruitment. To get a job it will help if your child has customer service experience or can show that they have developed relevant skills (eg building relationships and understanding other



people's needs) through extracurricular activities. Areas such as pharmaceutical or IT sales sometimes require a degree.

A number of graduate programmes are open to graduates from any degree discipline. IT companies may specify or prefer graduates with a degree in business or IT, and pharmaceutical companies often need graduates from a natural sciences, biomed, chemistry or life sciences background.

Marketing

Training programmes such as degree apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships are available. You can also get an entry-level marketing job without a degree. To get hired for the latter, your child is likely to need experience in a business setting (eg an admin job) and potentially a qualification from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). The CIM offers introductory courses and it's possible to study online and/or at evenings or weekends. Entry-level jobs in market research tend to be aimed at graduates, though your child could start in a support role and work their way up.

Some graduate roles are open to those with any degree subject; others require a relevant subject such as marketing or business studies. If your child studies a subject that isn't related to business, strongly encourage them to gain some relevant experience while at university.

PR

A number of PR employers offer higher apprenticeships. To get onto one, your child will need evidence of their interest in the profession. For example, they could show their interest in current affairs by writing a blog, or demonstrate that they are confident using social media by posting videos on a YouTube channel.

For graduate roles, some employers ask for a degree in a specific subject, and/or a 2.1 degree; others don't. If your child's degree

relates to the work that an employer does, that could give them an advantage: a science graduate may appeal to a PR organisation that specialises in healthcare communications, for example.

Management consulting

Some firms, often referred to as professional services firms, offer a range of services to clients, such as accountancy, tax and consulting; others are purely consulting firms. At the time of writing, the latter tend not to offer opportunities for school leavers. However, professional services firms PwC and Deloitte offer school leaver programmes in consulting while KPMG includes an opportunity to experience consulting in its school leaver option called 360°, which gives a taste of several different divisions.

Graduates from any degree discipline can become consultants. A 2.1 is the minimum grade usually required by employers. Intellectual ability is highly prized, so your child should study a subject they can get top grades in at the most prestigious university they can get into. ☺

* This is based on the new UCAS points system introduced in September 2017.

More help from TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/business to find:

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- salaries in business
- degree choices for business careers
- types of jobs and employers your child could choose.

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How to get into engineering

Explore paths into engineering and the grades required.



Would-be engineers who intend to complete their A levels, BTEC or Scottish Highers can either study for an engineering degree

before starting work or join a higher or degree apprenticeship programme with an engineering employer.

A level subjects

If your child wants to take a degree in engineering they need an A level (or equivalent) in maths. In many cases they will also need physics. Some chemical engineering degrees ask for maths and chemistry instead; some ask for all three. For some very prestigious universities it is helpful also to have further maths. See the extended version of this article at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/engineering for more details.

To get onto an engineering higher or degree apprenticeship your child will typically need maths and science A levels. Some employers specify which science subjects they want your child to have studied.

Grades required

If your child wants to get into a top university to study engineering they will typically need A-star and A grades in their A levels or equivalent. Universities that aren't as highly ranked often ask for As and Bs. Entry requirements for higher and degree apprenticeships are typically a bit lower. Some employers ask for C grades or above at A level or equivalent, while others set a minimum number of UCAS points, typically between 96 (CCC) and 120 (BBB)*.

The university route

Your child could study a particular area of engineering, such as mechanical engineering or civil engineering, or keep their options open with a general engineering degree. They can also choose between a course that leads to a bachelors-level qualification (BEng) or one that leads to a masters-level qualification (MEng).

Many engineering employers run internships and placement years for students seeking work experience, as well as graduate schemes for those who have completed their

degree. Some engineering degrees include a placement year as part of the course. As well as a job to do, graduates will receive formal training and might have the chance to try out different roles to see which suits them best. There are also many jobs for graduate engineers with companies that don't run formal graduate schemes. These are often with smaller organisations.

Joining an employer at 18

A number of engineering employers run higher and degree apprenticeships, which are aimed at those who've just finished their A levels (or equivalent). The qualifications your child would gain vary depending on the apprenticeship – some offer the chance to gain a bachelors degree; others offer a foundation degree, a higher national diploma or higher national certificate.

All programmes involve combining a job with part-time study, and their employer will typically pay all of their tuition fees. If your child does well their employer is very likely to offer them a permanent job once they finish the programme. It may also support them to continue their studies to a higher level.

Several engineering employers also offer sponsored degrees. Find out more about sponsored degrees on page 8.

Becoming professionally qualified

Many engineers choose to become professionally registered. This means that a professional body has certified that they have the right level of skills and knowledge to meet its benchmark. Engineers work towards becoming professionally registered over a period of time while in employment, gathering evidence of their skills and experience before being assessed.

There are different levels of professional registration. The highest is chartered

engineer, then incorporated engineer, then engineering technician. On average, chartered engineers earn more than incorporated engineers, and incorporated engineers earn more than engineering technicians.

The quickest and simplest route to chartered engineer status is with a masters degree; the quickest and simplest route to incorporated engineer level is with at least a bachelors degree. However, it's also possible to get there with lower qualifications, if you can prove that you've reached these levels of learning in another way. ©

* This is based on the new UCAS points system introduced in September 2017.



More help from TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE

Pick up a copy of TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE *Construction, Engineering & Property*.

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/engineering for more on engineering careers, including:

- an overview of types of jobs and employers in engineering
- advice on choosing an engineering degree or higher apprenticeship
- engineering salaries
- advice on engineering degree sponsorship.

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How to get into IT

Discover ways your child could start a career in technology.

There are IT jobs available at many different levels and offered by employers in every sector. If your child is doing well academically it makes sense for them to start a little way up the ladder, either by going to university and then getting a graduate-level job, or by starting work after their A levels (or equivalent) with an employer who will train them – eg via a higher apprenticeship or a degree apprenticeship.

Uni first, job later

It's possible to get into an IT career as a graduate with any subject. However, broadly

speaking, the less technical your child's degree the fewer roles will be open to them; as such they'll face more competition and need to be more impressive as a candidate. Bear in mind:

- Some technology employers require a specific IT-related degree, eg computer science or software engineering. This is particularly the case with smaller employers, who are less able to take graduates who need lots of training.
- Some technology employers accept subjects such as engineering, science or maths for IT jobs but won't accept arts or humanities.
- Several technology employers accept graduates with any degree and train them >>



up. This may be for slightly less technical roles. To beat the competition for these jobs, a strong academic record, evidence of an interest in technology and extracurricular achievements will help.

There is a wide range of IT degrees available. Your child could choose a broad, technically focused subject such as computer science, a more commercially focused degree such as business IT or something a bit more specialist such as computer games design, network engineering, digital media or animation. See targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors for our advice on degree choices for IT careers.

Maths at A level or equivalent is typically needed to get onto a degree in computer science or similar at a leading university, often at A or A-star grade. Less prestigious universities don't always ask for A level maths (or equivalent).

Starting work at 18

Degree apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships will allow your child to start work in IT after their A levels (or equivalent) and study towards higher level qualifications at the same time. See page 7 for more detail on how such programmes work. Lower levels of apprenticeship are also available.

A degree apprenticeship will enable your child to complete a technology-related degree part time while working for an employer. Participants earn a wage and have their studies paid for, meaning that they can graduate debt-free and with several years of valuable professional experience on their CV. Employers that offer IT degree apprenticeships include BT, CGI, Capgemini and Lloyds Banking Group.

Higher apprenticeships often include a foundation degree – the same level of

qualification as a higher national diploma, and equivalent to the first two years of a bachelors degree. Encourage your child to take a look at employers such as BT, National Grid, Siemens and BAE Systems.

To get onto a programme that includes a degree or foundation degree your child will typically need three A levels (or equivalent). UCAS points requirements tend to vary between 98 (CCC) and 120 (BBB)*. Sometimes their A levels need to include at least one or two science, maths or technology subjects.

There are also numerous higher apprenticeships in IT that don't include university study. Entry requirements for these vary widely. Some employers ask for three A levels or equivalent; others are happy with two. Some expect science, maths or technology subjects; others will accept any subject. And some specify minimum grades they will accept (typically Cs) while others don't. ☺

* This is based on the new UCAS points system introduced in September 2017.

More help from TARGETcareers FUTUREWISE

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/it-and-technology to find out more about careers in IT, including:

- an overview of the types of jobs and employers in IT
- typical salaries
- advice on choosing an IT degree
- types of tests used to assess candidates for IT higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships.

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