



Teachers' HE Factsheet

Post-18 Progression Pathways

This factsheet introduces teachers to the main post-18 progression pathways classified as Level 4-6 qualifications under the National Qualifications Framework. It shows how work-based and vocational pathways can lead to the obtaining of a degree.





AT A GLANCE

Key definitions

This factsheet focuses on explaining the following qualifications and frameworks

FHEQ = Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

RQF = Regulated Qualifications Framework

Honours Degree

An undergraduate academic degree awarded by universities and colleges of higher education

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Foundation Degree

Two thirds of a full honours degree. Vocational and fully flexible allowing students to study full or part-time

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Higher National Certificate (HNC)

A work related course, one level below a HND, provided by higher and further education colleges

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Degree Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship incorporating a full honours degree which facilitates both academic and on-the-job training

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Higher National Diploma (HND)

A work related course provided by higher and further education colleges

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Higher Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship incorporating academic and vocational qualifications and learning from Levels 4 to 7

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NATIONAL QUALIFICATION COMPARISON TABLES

Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are grouped into levels of difficulty, from entry level to the highest level of 8. Regulated qualifications can be either academic, vocational or work-based and are in either the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) or the Framework for HE Qualifications (FHEQ) as shown below.

Level	FHEQ examples	Apprenticeship†	RQF examples
8	Doctorate		Vocational qualifications Level 8 NVQ Level 5
7	Master's degree (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Integrated Master's degree (eg MEng) Postgraduate diploma Postgraduate certificate (eg PGCE)	Degree Higher	NVQ Level 5 BTEC Advanced Professional award, certificate and diploma Level 7
6	Bachelor's degree (honours) Graduate diploma Graduate certificate	Degree Higher	BTEC Advanced Professional award, certificate and diploma Level 6 NVQ Level 4
5	Foundation degree Higher national diploma (HND) Diploma of higher education (DipHE)	Higher	BTEC Professional award, certificate and diploma Level 5 NVQ Level 4 Higher national diploma (HND)
4	Higher national certificate (HNC) Certificate of higher education	Higher	BTEC Professional award, certificate and diploma Level 4 NVQ Level 4 Higher national certificate (HNC) Key skills Level 4
3		Advanced	AS and A levels BTEC award, certificate and diploma Level 3 NVQ Level 3 Cambridge Technical Level 3 International Baccalaureate
2		Intermediate	GCSE (grades A* - C) ^ BTEC award, certificate and diploma Level 2 NVQ Level 2 Cambridge Technical Level 2 Functional Skills/Skills for Life Level 2
1			GCSE (grades D - G) ^ BTEC award, certificate and diploma Level 1 NVQ Level 1 Functional Skills/Skills for Life Level 1 Cambridge Technical Level 1
Entry			Entry level Skills for Life Entry level Functional Skills Entry level Foundation Learning

Apprenticeships are work based training schemes and have been shown in between the two charts as the qualification part of the apprenticeship could fall either in the FHEQ or the RQF (eg a Foundation Degree or a NVQ)

^ A new grading system for GCSE exam results is being introduced from summer 2017. Eventually, all GCSE exams will be graded from 1 to 9 rather than the current A* to G, with 9 as the highest grade. Grade 4 will be equivalent to grade C on the previous system.
† Not qualifications, indicative levels only

NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS

As you can see on the previous page, some qualifications can span more than one level. Qualifications categorised at the same level are of a similar difficulty, but vary in size and content. For example, both AS levels and A levels are Level 3 qualifications but as AS levels are studied over 1 year and A levels over 2 years, students develop a deeper subject understanding through studying A levels.

Vocational and work-based pathways

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)



Who do they suit?

These Level 5 qualifications suit students/professionals wanting to develop skills for use in a particular job through the focus on 'learning by doing'.



Subjects

HNCs and HNDs can be studied at further and higher education colleges. Subjects available include: agriculture, business and management, computing, construction, engineering, health and social care, hospitality management, performing arts, retail distribution, sports and exercise science.



Entry

HND entry usually requires at least one A level and four GCSEs grade A*–C (see page 3 for the new grading system). HNCs usually take one year full-time and HNDs two years.



Progression

Highly valued by employers, they can also count towards membership of professional bodies, such as the ACCA for Accountancy students. They suit learners wishing to earn as they work, study towards a specific careers and undergo on-going assessments, projects and practical tasks. These qualifications also enable progression to a degree course (usually to the 2nd year from a HNC and to the 2nd or 3rd year from a HND).

Higher Level Apprenticeships



Who do they suit?

Higher level apprenticeships suit students who wish to learn a specific job alongside experienced colleagues, whilst studying towards a higher level qualification between Level 4 (eg HNC) and Level 7 (eg master's degree equivalent). The qualifications can be studied at a university, apprenticeship training provider or through a professional body. This 'off-the-job' training could be one day a week, or 'block-release' of several weeks in a training centre or college/university.



Subjects

Higher apprenticeships are available in around 50 subjects including: advertising, broadcasting, business and finance, care leadership, civil service, construction, creative and digital industries, energy and water, engineering, hospitality and tourism, innovation and growth, legal services, life and chemical sciences, marketing and PR, management, professional services, security and intelligence.



Entry requirements

These are usually between 64 and 104 UCAS points, plus 5 GCSEs at grades A*–C (see page 3 for the new grading system). Weekly salaries for Level 4/5 apprentices pay up to £480 (BIS apprenticeship survey 2014). Tuition fees for the qualification part of the apprenticeship are paid for by the government and employers.



Progression

At the end of the apprenticeship many apprentices stay with the firm. Progression to a degree or onto professional industry related qualifications are additional pathways.

Degree Apprenticeships



Who do they suit?

Introduced in 2015, degree apprenticeships suit students who wish to be in employment whilst studying for a full honours degree over approximately five years. The tuition fees are paid by the government and the employers. The learning style can be blended, combining work-place learning with distance learning, on-campus days and exams.



Subjects

Currently they are available in nine sectors: chartered surveying, electronic systems engineering, aerospace engineering, aerospace software development, defence systems engineering, laboratory science, nuclear power systems and PR.



Structure

There are currently two main structures for degree apprenticeships. One structure is a fully-integrated apprenticeship degree course which delivers and tests both academic learning and the vocational skills needed for the job role. The second structure is a degree programme to deliver the academic knowledge requirements, and additional training to meet the full apprenticeship requirements plus a separate occupational competence test at the end.



Entry requirements

These vary depending on the recruitment model of the employer. Sometimes they are based on UCAS points, sometimes they necessitate passing employer tests or already being employed by a participating employer. The majority of employers currently involved are from STEM sectors, plus a few from retail and financial services.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)



Who do they suit?

NVQs are a 'competence-based' qualification. They suit students wishing to develop a sector-focused skill-set. Learning is through practical, work-related tasks in order to develop the skills and knowledge to do a job effectively. They are designed to be studied at 5 levels, from introductory to senior management level. Level 4 NVQs are compared to Levels 4–6 of the RQF.



Subjects

They can be studied at an FE College, at work, or as part of an apprenticeship. Many career sectors offer NVQs, for example: business and management, catering and food, construction, distribution, engineering, health care, leisure, manufacturing and production, marketing/sales and property.



Structure

Students typically take between one and two years to complete a Level 4 NVQ. Assessment is undertaken through practical assignments, a portfolio of evidence and an assessor observing and questioning students about their knowledge and practical tasks.



Progression

Progression is possible from one level of NVQ to the next level NVQ and also onto vocational higher education pathways such as HNC/Ds and Foundation Degrees.

ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

Honours Degree – current trends



Four year sandwich degrees

These are popular as students gain a year's work-place experience which helps them stand out at graduate job interviews. Since the introduction of increased tuition fees, fast-track degrees are increasing in popularity as these can be completed in two years by working through the summer, or three years with a sandwich year.



Employability ratings

These are increasingly being used by students choosing their degree, alongside traditional comparisons such as institutional reputation and academic league tables. With the rise in paid degree programmes, prospective students are now comparing universities to find out which courses will best prepare them for the job market. Criteria being used include: graduate destination data (showing salaries, job titles and company names), whether or not the institution offers placements, internships and a year in industry, plus the extent to which the institution has involved employers and entrepreneurs in the planning and delivery of its curriculum and enrichment activities.



Enterprise

Some universities even offer enterprise degrees to teach students how to set up and run their own business. Many universities without enterprise degrees employ enterprise teams who can support students wanting to run their own business alongside studying.

Foundation Degrees



Who do they suit?

Foundation degrees suit students who are unsure about committing to a full honours degree, those who wish to study as they work and those who want more work experience as they study. They often offer smaller class sizes and more personalised learning. Foundation degree students are entitled to the same student financial support as honours degree students.



Subjects

Foundation degrees combine academic study with learning in the work-place. They are equivalent to two thirds of an honours degree, i.e. Level 5 on the FHEQ. The broad choice of subjects includes: accounting and business, agriculture and horticulture, applied sciences, building services, computing, design and fashion, early years, engineering, food, health and social care, hospitality, leisure and tourism, production, retail and sport.



Partnership delivery

They are designed and delivered through partnerships between employers, universities and further education colleges. This ensures that students learn the skills that employers are looking for in addition to academic development.



Entry requirements

These are lower than degree requirements and can vary widely, with some institutions accepting relevant experience in lieu of formal qualifications.



Structure

Full-time foundation degrees take two years to complete. Upon completion, students can progress to the third year of a degree in order to gain a full honours degree.

Sponsored Degrees



Increasing numbers of students are now looking for sponsored degrees to avoid paying tuition fees. 'Sponsored degrees' can be a confusing term as it is applied to different post-18 pathways. Sometimes it is used to describe a whole honours degree with modest sponsorship from professional bodies, sometimes it means sponsorship from employers requiring students to be employed by them before they will fund study. Employers also use the term when the 'degree' can be either a higher apprenticeship, foundation degree, or honours degree.

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR YOU



Use the resources and events information on the www.heon.org.uk website.

Keep up-to-date with useful information about changes in progression pathways and qualifications on such websites as:

www.careerpilot.org.uk

www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.ucas.com

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR YOUR STUDENTS

FOR INSPIRATION

Plotr - www.plotr.co.uk

Students play the game and discover which careers they might be suited to

I Could - www.icould.com/buzzquiz

Students take the quiz to identify their skills. There are plenty of links to careers Information and videos to watch

TO RESEARCH CAREERS

Careerpivot - www.careerpilot.org.uk/jobs

A page packed with information about multiple industries and roles

Student Ladder - www.studentladder.co.uk/Careers

Articles on a range of careers can be found here with plenty of other information available about progression pathways

UCAS Careers - bit.ly/UCAScareers

Students can research some job families and find out about work experience and other opportunities

POST 18 OPTIONS

National Careers Service - bit.ly/NCSjourney

Different pathways are explained on this interactive webpage

Bright Knowledge - bit.ly/BKpathways

Essential information on progression pathways can be found here

Careerpilot - bit.ly/CPhighered

Packed with information about higher education

Apprenticeships - bit.ly/GOVapprentice

A gov.uk page full of information about apprenticeships and how to find one

Careerpilot - www.careerpilot.org.uk/info/apprenticeships

Information on how to find, apply for and make the most of apprenticeships

Which? University guide A Level Explorer - bit.ly/ALevelexplorer

This tool allows students to input their current subjects and discover some degree course options, be sure to check the unexpected results

Moving from BTECs to university study - bit.ly/BTECOptions

Students can explore their options with their BTEC studies

UCAS - search.ucas.com

Students can search through all university courses here

What uni? - www.whatuni.com

A website which compares university and degree courses with rankings, course details and profiles

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Royal Holloway, University of London
University Centre Farnborough
University for the Creative Arts
University of Surrey

www.royalholloway.ac.uk
www.farn-ct.ac.uk/higher-education
www.uca.ac.uk
www.surrey.ac.uk

This guide has been designed and originally created by the Western Outreach Network www.won.ac.uk and has been amended for use by the **Higher Education Outreach Network**.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication at the time of going to print (September 2016).