

## Start by looking forwards

In years 10 and 11, there are plenty of things you can be exploring, doing and thinking about to help you plan and prepare for your future career.

Did you know that you do not need clear career ideas or goals just yet? However, it is important you are beginning to discover your career ideas and interests so you are ready and able to make decisions at all the key times over the next few years. After year 11 you will need to make an important decision about what you do and where you go to continue your qualifications.

By year 10 you should have formed **good habits and attitudes to learning** so you are now ready to cope with the increased demands of your GCSE courses. You should also be aware of **strengths and weaknesses**, and the subjects you need to make sure you get help and support with as well as focus more time on. You will **be aware of your personal qualities and skills**, and be taking time to develop these through school work and projects, extra-curricular activities, responsibilities at school and home, and even part-time work.

## Consider what you like and why

Now you have begun and are working through your GCSE courses, you will start to develop preferences for certain topics, tasks, certain ways of learning and perhaps particular talents will begin to emerge. Let's explore what these mean and how they can help you plan and make decisions for your future:

**Topics:** What are your favourite subjects and why? What topics interest you and make you want to find out more? Are there any topics that make you think you may want to study this subject or topic in the future?

**Tasks:** When you think about your favourite subjects, what do you enjoy doing the most? Is it class discussion, project work, independent research, practical, hands-on activities

**Ways of learning:** Thinking about tasks and what we enjoy can suggest how we learn best. Do you enjoy and cope well with class-room learning and theory? Do you prefer project work and coursework? Do you do well working to deadlines? Do you do well in exams? Would you prefer learning by doing either in an actual real-life workplace or a mocked up workplace?

**Talents:** Is there something you are really good at? It could be a subject, an activity like a hobby like football, singing or cooking. It could be you are the best in your year at Maths or History. Maybe you create your computer games or youtube videos in your spare time and people your age think they are brilliant. Maybe you write a blog or comment on something regularly on twitter so you have lots of followers.

It can be surprising what your interests, the way you prefer to learn and approach tasks and activities, and your talents reveal about you and the kind of further study, training and careers you may be suited to. If

you cannot identify your preferences and talents, then you may want to try some reverse thinking and identify things you definitely would not enjoy in terms of tasks, activities, and learning.

### Researching career ideas and interests

Although you do need to have definite career ideas or goals in year 10 and 11, this is an important time to be researching careers to gather some possible direction which can help you make decisions about what you plan to do after year 11. At this stage in your career exploration make sure you are asking the right questions when researching about career roles and jobs. The following can help:

- What would I be doing as part of this job?
- What do I need to get in terms of qualifications at GCSE and beyond, to enter such a career?
- What else may I need to enter such a career other than qualifications? Particular skills and personal qualities? Work experience? Is it competitive to enter such a career?
- What is the salary? How does this compare with other career roles and jobs?
- How would this kind of work fit with the kind of life I may want to lead? E.g. is it shift work? Would I be working away from home?
- Does this career appeal to me? Why?
- Are there any other roles or jobs similar to this career?

You can research careers on-line – please check out our Useful Websites PDF

An important part of researching careers is not only finding out factual information but also through your own experiences with the working world. It may be that your school arrange for you to participate in work experience where you spend 5 to 10 days with one or two companies or organisations and get to experience the work place, a particular industry and observe different career roles and the work tasks these involve. If your school does not arrange work experience, there is nothing to stop you from arranging your own placement in your school holidays. Some schools also arrange for people and professionals from particular career roles to come into school and speak with you. This is a great opportunity to find out more. Again, this is something you can be doing outside of school when you speak with adults friends, family, neighbours about the kind of careers and jobs they do and what it involves.

### Your options after year 11

Towards the end of year 10, you will need to start thinking ahead to what you may want to do after year 11. You now have to continue with a qualification for two years after you finish your GCSEs.

This does not mean you have to stay at school. You have many options:

- Continue with a qualification in education. This can mean staying at your school's sixth form if it has one and you want to. You can also study qualifications at a local college.

- Continue with a qualification through training. Training can either take place as part of an apprenticeship or on a specialist course at college. An apprenticeship is where you go to work to do a job, but it is understood you need to be trained and gain experience to do that job. The workplace will enable you to gain experience while you work towards a qualification. You will get paid and ideally at the end of your apprenticeship, the workplace will employ you as a fully qualified member of staff doing that job role.

As you start to think about the type of qualification you may wish to take after year 11, it is worth being aware of the fact that your GCSE grades will allow you to access particular qualification levels:

- If you get five grade 4s or above at GCSE when you are at school you have achieved level 2 and can move onto level 3 qualifications
- If you get four grade 3s at GCSE when you are at school you have achieved level 1 and can move onto level 2 qualifications
- If you achieve less than four grade 3s at GCSE then you can move onto level 1 qualifications

## Qualifications

**A levels** (available at level 3 only): Traditional subject orientated qualifications that enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding in-depth, developing analysis and critical thought. A levels are taught in the classroom but require further learning to be undertaken by the student outside of the classroom in their own time, researching and revising. Much of the final grade for an A level will be determined by exams at the end of the course and through a small amount of coursework depending on the subject. A levels prepare students for the demands of higher education, training or work. To study a subject at A level you will be expected to get at least grade 6 or 7 in that subject or a related subject at GCSE.

**BTECs:** Industry orientated qualifications that enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding in depth, developing analysis and aptitude that can be applied to work based projects and tasks. BTECs are taught in the classroom but require further learning to be undertaken by the student outside of the classroom in their own time, producing coursework. Much of the final BTEC grade will be determined through project based tasks and practical assessments. BTECs prepare students for the demands of further and higher education, training or work.

**Apprenticeships:** Job role specific qualifications that enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding in depth, developing specific aptitude for work based tasks and projects. Advanced Apprenticeships are taught through work place experience, observation and practice, and depending on the apprenticeship, learners may be released to attend a local college or training provider to cover the theory element of their qualification. Apprenticeships prepare students for the demands of further and higher education, training or work.

At some colleges you can take a combination of both A levels with BTECs.

While deciding which qualification is going to be right for you, consider the following:

- What are your grades going to allow you to access? Some A levels require a B grade or grade 6/7 in that subject or a related subject at GCSE. Many apprenticeships will insist on Maths and English at grade C or grade 5 at GCSE.
- How do you learn best? Do you prefer exams or coursework? Do you like theory and classroom based learning or do you prefer to be practically learning?
- What subjects interest you? Are they traditional academic subjects such as English, Geography or Chemistry? Are they new subjects like Philosophy or Psychology? Are they industry related subjects such as ICT, Media, Hairdressing or Engineering?
- Where do you see yourself? Are you a student at college or do you see yourself in the workplace?
- What are your longer term plans? Do you have a career in mind? What qualifications and subjects does this require? Can you undertake an apprenticeship to do this career? Do you need a degree? If you are not sure about your career plans, does your chosen qualification(s) keep a few options open such as university or work?