



Howden School

Post-16 Information for Parents/Carers and Students

Preparing for Post-16 courses can be an overwhelming and stressful experience for both students and parents. There are a lot of terms and qualifications types that you may have not come across before and that can be confusing.

Hopefully, the following guide will help to answer some of those questions. If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Issatt, who will be able to answer your questions.

'A' Levels – Level 3 Qualifications

'A' Level qualifications are more academic in nature and focus on traditional study skills. They usually take two years to complete.

Entry requirements vary according to which Post-16 Provider students wish to apply for and which subjects they wish to study. Typically, students will be expected to have achieved 5 A*-C including English and Maths. Many courses will ask students to have achieved a Grade B or above in the subject they wish to study.

From 2015, the Government will begin introducing changes to 'A' Level subjects. These changes mean that the new reformed 'A' Levels will be 'linear', with all assessment undertaken at the end of two years of study.

The subjects that will be linear from 2015 are English Language, English Literature, English Language & Literature, the Sciences, History, Psychology, Art & Design, Business Studies and Computing.

The remaining subjects will continue as before, with students gaining half their marks assessed through the AS qualification in the first year of study. AS Levels are equivalent to half an A Level. Some students gain an AS qualification and then do not complete the second year to achieve an A Level.

Some Post-16 providers will ask students to select 4 A Level subjects. Some will ask students to select up to 5 A Level subjects.

Upon successful completion of a Level 3 qualification students will be in a position to go into the workplace or apply for University (Level 4) courses.

Vocational Courses

Vocational qualifications offer a more practical approach to learning that relates to specific jobs or industries e.g. childcare, business, sport.

Unlike A Levels, there are different “Levels” of vocational qualifications.

Entry Level – Up to 1 Year

There are often no formal entry requirements for these courses, which are designed to provide students with **essential life and study skills**.

Entry Level programmes can help prepare students to begin Level 1 Courses.

Level 1 – 1 Year

Level 1 qualifications are equivalent to GCSE F-D grades. Students will usually need to have gained E and F grades in their GCSEs to study a Level 1 programme.

Successful completion of Level 1 courses can allow students to progress to Level 2 courses.

Level 2 – 1 Year

Level 2 qualifications are equivalent to GCSE A*-C grades. Students will usually be expected to have achieved at least four GCSEs at grade D or above to enrol on one of these programmes, although requirements can vary according to which Post-16 Provider students wish to attend.

Successful completion of Level 2 courses can allow students to progress to Level 3 courses.

Level 3 – 2 Years

Level 3 vocational qualifications are equivalent to three ‘A’ Levels so students will usually need to have achieved at least five GCSE passes at grade C or above to enrol on these programmes. However, requirements can vary according to which Post-16 Provider students wish to attend.

Upon successful completion of a Level 3 qualification students will be in a position to go into the workplace or apply for university courses, which are Level 4 and above.

Functional Skills:

These courses cover Maths, English and ICT (computer skills). Students are often instructed by colleges to complete Functional Skills in addition to their chosen courses if they haven’t gained the relevant GCSE pass grades (A-C).

Apprenticeships – Level 2, 3 or 4 Qualifications

Apprenticeships allow students to earn while they learn. They combine on-the-job experience with college based study. Apprenticeships are Government-funded programmes.

However, students need to approach work places to arrange apprenticeships because many apprenticeships are not advertised until June / July. Students also need to ensure that the employer has, or is willing to establish, a formal relationship with a college for the college based study element of the Apprenticeship. Apprenticeships can be Level 2, 3 or 4. The entry requirements vary considerably depending of the Level of the qualification.