

FOUR PATHWAYS TO YOUR FUTURE

What This Means for 16-19 Learners (2025-2028)

- The government is simplifying qualifications so that young people choose between **Academic**, **Technical**, and **Work-Based** routes.
- By 2028, **A Levels**, **T Levels**, **Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs)**, and **Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)** will be the main Level 3 options.
- Many older **BTEC** and **Vocational Technical Qualifications (VTQ)** courses will be replaced or restructured to align with these new pathways.
- Schools and colleges will help learners identify the most suitable route based on strengths, career goals, and learning style.

PATHWAY	WHAT OPTIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE?			LEVEL	ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	IDEAL IF YOU...	LEADS TO...	KEY MESSAGE
ACADEMIC PATHWAY (A Levels & AAQ)	1 3 x A Levels	2 2 x A Levels + 1 small AAQ	3 1 x large AAQ	Level 3	Usually 5 x GCSEs at grade 4–9, including English and maths. Some subjects need higher grades in specific areas.	Enjoy academic learning, exams, and independent study.	University, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, and professional careers.	The traditional route for learners aiming for higher education.
TECHNICAL PATHWAY (T Levels, TOQs & Occupational Diplomas)	1 T-Levels	2 Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs)	3 Occupational Entry Diplomas	Level 2 to Level 3	Usually 4–5 GCSEs at grade 4–9, including English and maths.	Want to combine classroom learning with industry experience and develop specialist technical skills.	Skilled employment, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, or technical degrees.	The new specialist route for learners focused on technical careers.
VOCATIONAL PATHWAY (VTQs & BTECs – during the transition)	1 VTQs still available in some areas	2 BTECs and Cambridge Technicals (until phased out)		Level 1 to Level 3	Level 1–2 courses: open to learners with fewer GCSEs grades 1–4 Level 3 courses: usually 4–5 GCSEs at grade 4–9	Prefer practical, hands-on projects and continuous assessment.	Further study, Apprenticeships, or direct employment in skilled trades, health, business, and creative industries.	A practical skills-based route being streamlined as new technical qualifications replace some courses.
WORK-BASED PATHWAY (Apprenticeships & Supported Internships)	1 Apprenticeships (Intermediate to Advanced)	2 Supported Internships (for learners with SEND)	3 Work Experience or Industry Placements as part of a Study Programme	Entry Level to Level 3	Vary by employer; typically GCSE English and maths (grade 4+) for Level 3+.	Ready to earn while you learn and gain real work experience.	Employment, Higher or Degree Apprenticeships.	Learn on the job, develop skills, and get paid while you train.

Speak to a Careers Adviser to help you explore the options in more detail.