

STUDY PROGRAMMES:


MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE
A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT'S THIS GUIDE ABOUT?



This guide will help you figure out for yourself how being part of a study programme can support you in life. A good study programme experience is tailored to you. It helps you feel hopeful, identify your own purpose for learning and confidently take action to build your career.

Study programmes normally start in September and follow the academic year. This guide helps you research which study programme is right for you. It is designed to answer some of the questions you may have – and help you feel confident to ask more questions of study programme providers. (We'll use the term 'providers' to refer to colleges, sixth forms, work-based training and any other organisations who provide study programmes.) We want you to be absolutely sure that the study programme you choose is the one that's right for you.

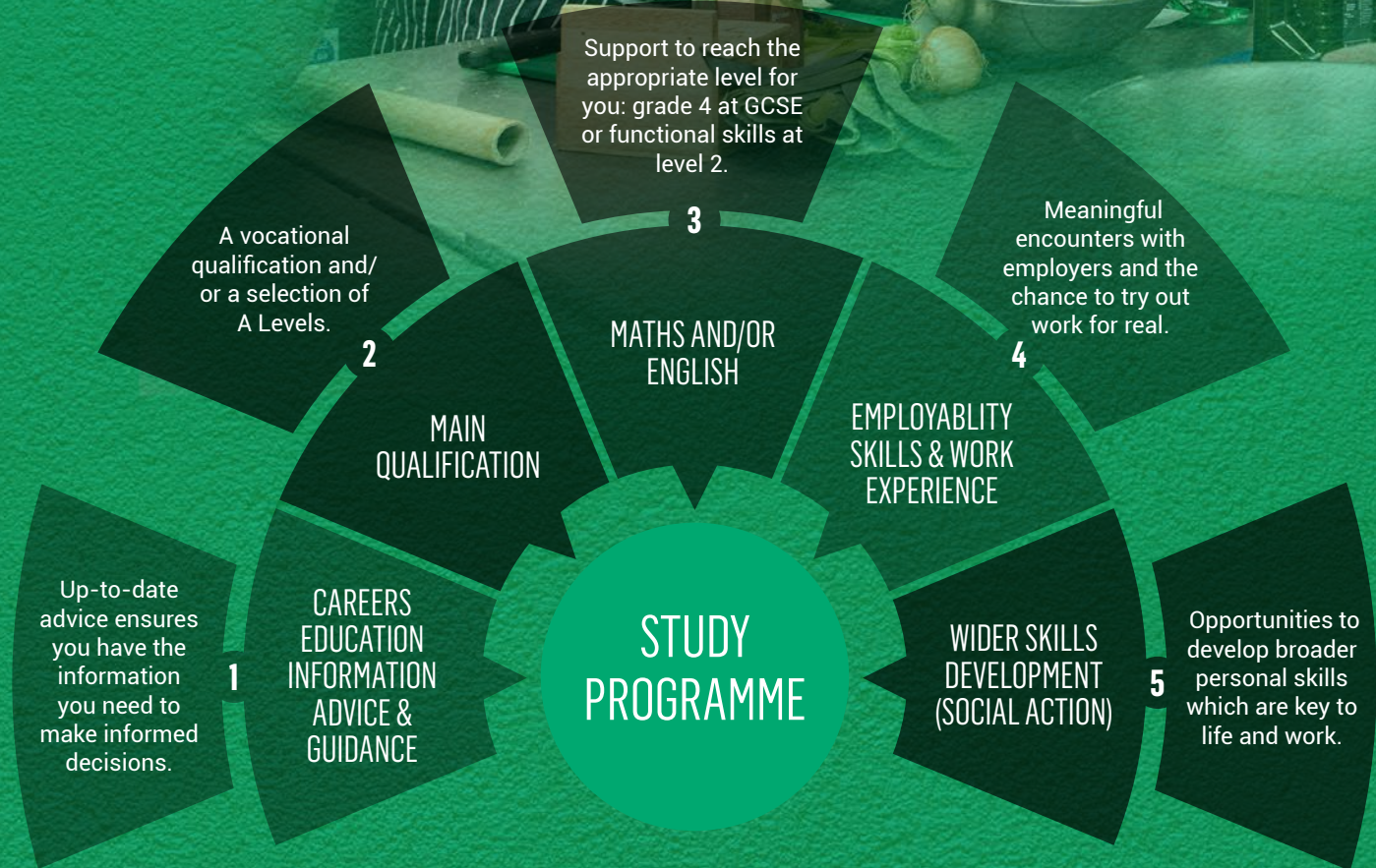
Access to a study programme is equal for everyone. If you need any extra help, this will be taken into account so please don't think this opportunity can't be for you.

SECTION 1:

WHAT ARE STUDY PROGRAMMES?

What do you want to do in life? That's a tough question. You might have a clear idea of what you want to do, and then again you might not. Either way a study programme will give you access to work experience so that you can try out a career, whilst gaining the sort of skills and qualifications employers love to see.

Study programmes typically combine a vocational (job-related) qualification with maths and English (if you don't already have them at GCSE grade 4 or above), work experience and the opportunity to try out new people skills through volunteering. You should be entitled to independent careers guidance to help you choose a study programme that is right for you.



SECTION 2:

WHY DO I HAVE TO DO A STUDY PROGRAMME?

All young people aged 16-18 have to be engaged in some form of learning, in the same way you are expected to attend school until you are 16. Instead of a study programme, you could start an apprenticeship or traineeship.

I WANT A JOB – WHAT ABOUT ME?

Kelvin already had a part-time job at a café which he wanted to keep. So he continued working and enrolled on a catering course at college, using the café job as his work experience hours and volunteering with a food bank once a week.

This way Kelvin got the skills training he needed, brought his maths and English up to scratch and grew his confidence with real on-the-job experience – win/win!

I WANT TO GO TO UNI – WHAT ABOUT ME?

Aisha had her sights set on a sports degree but hadn't thought further than that. She planned to do A Levels in the sixth form and was attending maths top-up classes at school, to ensure she got the grade she needed. She played football with a local team and they gave her the opportunity to help with coaching younger players, as a volunteer. This experience helped her decide on sports coaching as a path.

If university is not in your immediate plan, it could still be an opportunity for the future. People go to uni at all stages of life, including alongside a career.

A study programme is also a great pathway to apprenticeships and to higher level technical qualifications (T Levels).



REMEMBER

- Your study programme will be based on what you want to do with your life, and you will get lots of guidance to help you with this.
- Extra support is available if and when you need it.
- Your study programme will help you gain work-related skills and experiences which will look good to potential employers.



SECTION 3:

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Study programmes help you find a purpose in life. You get to choose your direction, develop job-worthy skills and grow in confidence. A good study programme helps you feel hopeful about life, because it is practical and relevant to you.

DEVELOPING SKILLS THAT EMPLOYERS WANT

Learning to work isn't just about learning a skill. It's also about...learning to work. Employers look for people who are 'work ready'. This means getting along with people (including people who you feel are different to you), customer service, problem solving, giving new things a go and being reliable. It's about being comfortable in the work environment whilst also being you. Work experience helps you practise this.

Another great way to become work ready is by volunteering. Volunteering is a reward in itself, plus it's a great opportunity to learn how to work alongside others. It looks good on your CV! You'll probably have some ideas about what you want to do, and your provider will help you find opportunities.



REMEMBER

- Study programmes help you find a purpose in life, they are a step forward to getting the career you want – and this helps you feel hopeful.
- They are all about learning useful skills. Not just useful for work, but useful for life.
- The study programme commitment you make now can only be positive. It doesn't rule anything else out in the future. You call the shots.



BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR




DEVELOPING REAL-LIFE PRACTICAL SKILLS

Choosing the right study programme will give you the chance to learn real-life, real-world skills and behaviours. These are known as vocational skills and behaviours. Your personal and social development is just as useful as getting qualifications. Employers don't mind what age people are, what they want is people who have got the right mindset for work.



SECTION 4:

WHICH STUDY PROGRAMME ROUTE SHOULD I TAKE?



It's time to start making some decisions. At this stage, anything is possible. You definitely shouldn't discount any opportunities because 'it's not what girls do', 'it's not what boys do' or 'it's not what people like me do'. Nothing about your life so far should limit your aspiration.

What you need is information. It's impossible to make any sort of decision without knowing the facts. Information helps you hold out for what you want, even if people around you are trying to channel you somewhere else (adults can be very well meaning and still get it wrong sometimes).

STEP ONE: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

You've probably heard of careers guidance, sometimes called CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance). Your careers leader at school will help guide you but it's good to do your own research too.

USEFUL WEBSITES TO GET YOU STARTED



The **National Careers Service** offers free and impartial information, advice and guidance to help you with your decisions about careers, courses and work.

icould.com has lots of videos of people in different occupations describing what they do. Take the **Buzz Quiz** to identify your strengths and get started on potential career pathways.

Youth Employment UK has a **careers hub** that sets out the range of careers that are available, how in demand certain jobs are and what you might earn.

The Prince's Trust **All About School-Leavers** also offers a career test that might get you thinking in unexpected directions.

Prospects is an excellent resource if you are thinking about going to university. There is a useful **Career Planner** that gives you ideas about what jobs you might be suited to.

What do you really want to do with your life? Most people will have an idea of what they enjoy – cooking, working with children, taking computers apart – but are a little unclear about how that translates to the job market. Don't worry! You're not alone.

You may know someone who does the work you're interested in – talk to them! Friends, parents and family members are usually willing to share their experience – good and bad – and this will give you a realistic idea of the employment prospects and work involved. They may even know someone who might be able to offer you more information or even a work taster.

Speak to your tutor about your career ideas. Find out what your school careers programme offers. It can also make sense to talk with people you know who are already on a study programme.

You will need to be fairly clear-sighted about your own skills – and your work ethic. Some things might literally not be possible. But that doesn't mean you have to lack ambition. When people are focused on a dream and willing to work for it, great things happen.

STEP TWO: CHOOSING WHERE TO LEARN

Once you've got an idea of the path you want to follow, it's time to start researching local further education providers (these are the people who run study programmes). Each of these will have some form of prospectus online: a menu of what they offer.

You can get an idea of what a place is like from their website, but you really need to visit. After all, you'll be travelling there most days and the logistics need to work for you.

Most providers will have open days advertised on their website. But if they don't – or the dates don't work for you – don't worry. Be bold and book a visit in!



TOP TIPS

FIND OUT:

- how to get there and how much the journey will cost (your local transport company may have a helpful app)
- what equipment you might need for the course
- what time the day starts and when it ends
- which days you need to be at the college/provider (you'll be doing a mixture of work experience and volunteering on the other days)
- any financial help you might be able to receive, such as a bursary
- what types of support are available, such as wellbeing, counselling, learning and disability support.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So you (sort of) know what you want to do and you have an idea of where you can do it. Now it's time to choose a course. This will involve conversations between you and the careers leader at your current school. You can talk about your hopes and aspirations and together you can balance these with what you are ready for right now, so that you can grow in confidence.

When you're ready to apply, there will be people to help you.



REMEMBER

- Research careers and figure out the direction you want to go in.
- Check out the further education providers in your area – or further afield.
- Bring it all together and start researching courses. Keep a real or virtual notebook dedicated to this.
- Do some visits and then apply.



SECTION 5:

WHY ARE MATHS AND ENGLISH SO IMPORTANT?

You might be a bit worried about doing maths and English as part of your study programme. It's true that you will need to get up to scratch if you don't already have maths and English at GCSE grade 4. No matter what career path you choose, employers want to know you'll be able to keep up with the needs of the job.

But don't worry! If you've been switched off by maths or English at school, be reassured that learning at college is totally different. For one thing, everybody is in the same boat and the teacher knows that. You'll be able to see why maths and English are important for the work you want to do. Once you work out your own purpose, things will start to click into place.

Your schoolteachers have probably said all this to you, but that doesn't mean it isn't true!

WHY ENGLISH AND MATHS ARE IMPORTANT



- ✓ More self-confident
- ✓ Higher earnings
- ✓ Greater sense of wellbeing
- ✓ Hopeful about life
- ✓ Feeling secure
- ✓ Needed in workplace and community
- ✓ Helps you communicate with others
- ✓ Helps you function in the real world
- ✓ Achieving your potential




REMEMBER

- > People who have English and maths at GCSE grade 4 or equivalent tend to be higher earners (up to £2000 more a year), with higher levels of confidence and wellbeing.
- > Learning maths and English as part of a study programme is very different from learning it at school, because the teaching is relevant to the career you are interested in.
- > Maths and English help us all function better in life and work.



SECTION 6:

WORK EXPERIENCE



Work experience will help you see first-hand what it is like to be at work. You'll learn what it means to be 'professional'. You'll also be able to assess how 'work-ready' you are. This will help you target the skills and behaviours you need to develop further in order to build your chosen career.

WHAT WILL I BE EXPECTED TO DO?

This will vary from placement to placement, but the expectations on you will be reasonable. You won't be expected to do anything that you are not qualified to do, but you will be expected to behave with the same professionalism as everyone else. The amount of time you spend on work experience will vary according to what else you are doing.

You will assist as far as possible with the day-to-day work. For example, no-one will expect you to cut hair, but you will observe and photograph others cutting hair, to practise later, back in the training salon. You might also sweep up, answer the phone – and yes, make the tea sometimes. There will also be times when people make tea for you !

If you're following an A Level path, the 'work experience' element may take the form of talks from employers as well as actual placement time. These opportunities will begin to form career relationships that will continue throughout your time at uni.

SUPPORT FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

Employers are much more used to having people on work placements than you are used to going on them, so you can feel confident that they know how to support you. Your workplace supervisor will be on hand to guide you and answer any questions you may have. You might also be paired up with another student, so that you can support each other. And you will have a key contact person back at the education provider, who will regularly check in with you.

It is up to you to raise any worries or concerns you may have, so that they can be addressed right away.

Your vocational teachers will integrate your work placement experience with classroom activity, so that you can see the relevance of how each element works together. They will also help you see where your volunteering commitment fits in.



REMEMBER

- Once you know what direction you want to go in, start researching local (and national) employers. What sort of reputation do they have? Do you feel drawn to them – and why?
- Find out what jobs are available in the vocational areas you are interested in. **The Labour Market Information for All** website will give you an easy-to-use starting point.
- Ask a friend to write down your skills, experience and good qualities (and do the same for them). You are more likely to find their good points than you are your own.
- Finally, give work experience your all and grasp as many opportunities as you can to show your skills. You'll get a great reference from your employer – and you never know, they might offer you a job!



SECTION 7:

WHY VOLUNTEERING?

You might be surprised to see that there is a volunteering option for the study programme. Although you may have had various opportunities to get involved in volunteering during your time at school, you might not have connected this with your career pathway. Getting involved in volunteering is character forming – and employers love it. A survey carried out by Timebank (a volunteering charity) showed how much leading businesses valued volunteering.



WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering can help with your confidence because it makes you feel good about yourself to help others. You will develop and evidence new skills that you can add to your CV. And it's an opportunity to try out a different career setting, which is useful if you're not sure about what pathway you want to take.

WHAT COUNTS AS VOLUNTEERING?

Volunteering opportunities could include:

- > volunteering with a charity
- > mentoring others
- > national Citizen Service or Prince of Wales Awards
- > campaigning about an issue you care about
- > running a fundraising event
- > local litter picking or another regular group
- > serving your community in some other way.



REMEMBER

There are many ways to volunteer, so be creative! Take a look at these websites as they will help you to get started:

DO IT

This website allows users to search under their postcodes for local volunteering opportunities.

VINSPIRED

Helping young people (14-25) to make their mark on causes that they care about, whilst learning new skills and talents along the way.

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

A national charity which connects you up with local opportunities.


SECTION 8:

USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK


Below you'll find some 'Key Questions' to help guide your conversations with the people you meet, as you research which study programme is right for you.

 **KEY QUESTION 1:** Which employers do you work with and how do they get involved?

Employers are expected to get involved with study programmes so look for evidence of this on the provider's website. It's worth asking whether there might be an employer willing to mentor you!

 **KEY QUESTION 2:** What are the job prospects in the career I've chosen? Will I have to move away to find work?

When you're starting out, you could do with some reassurance about the local and national job market, particularly as digital technology is changing the way we work so much. The **Labour Market Information for All** is helpful.

 **KEY QUESTION 3:** What links do you have to local volunteer bureaus to help me find opportunities that challenge and interest me?


Every area has a volunteer bureau – usually called Voluntary Action or a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). You might want to make sure that the study programme provider has links with them and invites them along to any open days.

 **KEY QUESTION 4:** What support can I expect to receive?

Make sure you ask about what support will be available a) at the work experience host, b) at the volunteering host and c) back at the education provider. Ask about any additional learning or wellbeing support too.

 **KEY QUESTION 5:** What options can you offer me after this study programme?

You may go straight from your study programme into full-time work but you may also decide to stay in education. You will want to know whether you can do that with the same provider and what that might look like.

 **KEY QUESTION 6:** What evidence do you have that this study programme will work out for me?

All education providers collect student data – it's what they have to do. It might be helpful for you to know how effective their study programmes are before you make a decision.

 **KEY QUESTION 7:** What sports and social activities do you offer?

Study programmes aren't just about studying. You may wish to see where you'll be able to eat and socialise, and what events and activities are on offer.

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