

# WHAT GRADES DO I NEED?

This guide shows **typical minimum GCSE grades** for post-16 options from 2026–2028. Some courses, subjects and employers may ask for higher grades, so always check the entry requirements for each provider.

Pathways can be mixed and are not always linear.

Key: Each square = one GCSE at that grade

PATHWAY	ENTRY / LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
<b>ACADEMIC PATHWAY</b> Subject-based study that keeps university and higher study options open.	PREPARATION FOR GCSEs IN ENGLISH & MATHS	GCSE RESITS BUILD YOUR GRADES	<b>A LEVELS</b> 5 5 5 5 5  <b>AAQs</b> ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS 4 4 4 4 4
	<b>English &amp; maths:</b> If you have not achieved Grade 4, you will usually continue studying these alongside your chosen route.		
<b>TECHNICAL PATHWAY</b> Practical study linked to a specific industry or occupation.	INTRODUCTORY TECHNICAL COURSES NO FORMAL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAY OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES 3 3 3 3	<b>T LEVELS</b> 4 4 4 4 4
<b>VOCATIONAL PATHWAY</b> Applied learning that mixes theory, skills and real-world contexts.	ENTRY LEVEL CERTIFICATES & DIPLOMAS NO FORMAL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	FURTHER STUDY PATHWAY FOUNDATION CERTIFICATES 3 3 3 3	<b>V LEVELS</b> PHASED IN FROM 2027 4 4 4 4 4
	LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATES & DIPLOMAS 1 1 1	<b>VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS</b> e.g. BTECs, CTECs (AVAILABLE DURING TRANSITION 2026 - 2028) 3 3 3 3      4 4 4 4 4	
<b>WORK BASED PATHWAY</b> Earn, learn and train directly with an employer.	SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS USUALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-24 WITH AN EHCP  NO FORMAL GCSE REQUIREMENTS	FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIP JOB WITH TRAINING	<b>ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP</b>
		INTERMEDIATE APPRENTICESHIP	
		<b>Apprenticeships:</b> Entry is set by the employer/provider. English and maths may be studied during training.	

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