



Find Your Path

Information Booklet

2024

Legally, all young people have to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. This means that students will need to attend College or do some form of work-based learning (Apprenticeship / Traineeship) for two years after leaving Downlands Community School. All young people also have the option of studying for a third year without being charged for their study.

Understanding Qualifications

Which level is right for me?

The level of the course gives an idea of how demanding the course is going to be – the higher the level the more difficult the qualification. There are nine levels ranging from Entry Level to Level 8. Every level contains different types of qualifications. Some are subject based, e.g. A levels and some are vocational (work based) e.g. BTECs, T Levels and Apprenticeships. Students work at a level that suits their abilities and experience in a particular subject. Once you have gained a qualification at one level you can move up to the next.



When you are considering what level to study after Year 11 you should consider:

- **Your starting point** – what level are you working at now?
- **The end point** – can you move onto higher level qualifications?
- **Job entry requirements** – most jobs require level 2 qualifications, many expect level 3
- **Higher education requirements** – most courses require level 3 qualifications (+ English/Maths Grade 4)

Types of Courses

A Levels

A Levels are studied for two years with exams at the end of the two years of study. They will contain little or no coursework.

It is possible to take A levels in conjunction with other courses, i.e., BTEC's.

A Levels are graded A* - E and score points (UCAS points) which count towards university entrance

It is important to check entry requirements via individual college websites. Some subjects require specific entry requirements. Generally, to study 3 A Levels you will need to gain a minimum 6 x 9-4 grades at GCSE, including English Language / Maths.

Universities generally require 3 A levels or equivalent as entry to most Degree courses.

Check www.ucas.com for up-to-date information.

Applied / Vocational A Levels

These courses place emphasis on the practical application of skills, knowledge and understanding within a broad vocational area e.g., Business Studies, Health and Social Care.

They also provide a basis for further training, higher education or progression to appropriate employment.

Applied A levels are available in work related subjects as Single or Double and sometimes Triple awards.

The Double Award (12 units) is equivalent to two academic A levels. The Single Award (6 units) is equivalent to one academic A level.

There is often more practical and assessment work than in academic A levels – you should check individual college course prospectuses for breakdown of assessment and exam

They can be studied alongside academic A Levels and also score UCAS points.

T (Technical) Levels

T Levels were introduced in 2020 and every year a wider range of subjects are being made available. They are technical qualifications that allow students to combine studying with a substantial industry placement and are open to students who have completed their GCSEs. They are a standalone qualification that is equivalent to three A Levels.

T Levels have been designed in collaboration with employers, so the content prepares students for entry into skilled employment or a higher-level Apprenticeship. T Levels carry UCAS points in line with A levels so will also allow progression to university. These are the T Levels offered locally at present. There will be more on offer in due course.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Building Services Engineering for Construction | Crawley / BACA |
| • Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction | Crawley/ MET |
| • Digital Production, Design and Development | Crawley / Collyers |
| • Digital Support Services | Crawley / MET |
| • Education and Early Years | Crawley/ ESCG Lewes / Haywards Heath/ MET/ Northbrook |
| • Event and Business Management | ESCG Lewes |
| • Health | Crawley |
| • Health and Science | Crawley |
| • Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing | Crawley |
| • Media Broadcast and Production | Crawley / ESCG Lewes / MET |

You can find out more information at: <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/students> and college websites

International Baccalaureate (IB)

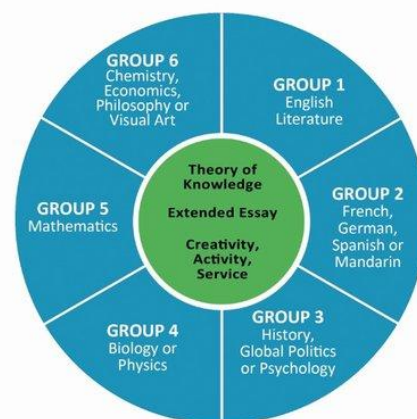
The IB is taught worldwide and is internationally recognised and understood by universities and employers as an excellent preparation for further study or employment.

Students study 6 subjects plus the core programme which includes:

- Extended essay (research project and 4000-word essay on a topic of your choice)
- Theory of Knowledge (a study of the foundations of knowledge)
- Creativity, Action, Service (a programme of extra-curricular activities).

Students will study 3 subjects at Higher Level and 3 at Standard Level. Subjects are scored out of 7 with a maximum score over all areas of 45. All exams take place in May of Year 13.

A mixture of at least 7 GCSEs at Grade 6 or above, including English, Maths and Science are required. In addition, certain subjects at both Standard and Higher Level have particular subject requirements. Check prospectus.



IB Open Evening – Tuesday 8th October 6.30-7.45 at Varndean College

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) – offered in Year 13

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) gives you the opportunity to independently research and write a 5-6,000-word dissertation on a topic of your choice in Year 2. It is excellent preparation for university as it mirrors the style of research and assessment you will encounter in higher education. For those not planning on university, it showcases deep knowledge of a topic of your choice which can feed into any future career choices

- You can pursue a particular area of academic interest in depth, perhaps in a topic related to your higher education direction.
- Some universities will give a lower offer to students who are taking the EPQ
- Some universities will give additional funding to students who have taken the EPQ
- Employers see the EPQ as evidence of maturity and the ability to self-manage

BTEC

These courses are specialist vocational qualifications valued by industry and higher education alike. They often tend to be more vocational – work based and can be studied at Level 2 and Level 3.

There are three 'sizes' of BTEC: Certificate, Extended Certificate and Diploma (Subsidiary Diploma and Extended Diploma) equivalent to one, two or three A levels.

All units and overall qualification will be awarded a mark of Pass, Merit or Distinction / Distinction*

The course will involve producing a portfolio of evidence and final exams.

You will need to have an interest in a specific area of work e.g., plumbing / childcare and the course often involves a period of work experience.

As for A Levels you can use these qualifications to gain entry to university. Check www.ucas.ac.uk for entry requirements.

Level 2 courses

It is now a statutory requirement that all students are required to retake GCSE Maths and English Language if they do not attain a grade 4 (or above) in their education to date.

These retakes can be taken alongside A levels, if other entry requirements are met, or alongside a level 2 programme of study. Students can then progress to Level 3 courses the following year.

Foundation Learning

This is an Entry Level / Level 1 programme. This course includes three distinct components:

- Vocational knowledge, skills and understanding
- Functional Skills (Maths, English, ICT)
- Personal and Social development

Foundation learning programmes are designed for students who have had limited achievement at school, for any reason. They are designed to promote progressions as well as helping students to achieve nationally recognised qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are available across a huge number of occupational areas: Accountancy, Business Administration, Animal Care, Construction, Engineering, Hairdressing, Motor Industry, Retail and many more.

Sometimes students would prefer to learn on the job and would prefer to go to work instead of full-time college.

It is possible to do an apprenticeship at Level 2 or Level 3 from leaving school.

Level 2 (Intermediate) Apprenticeship

Entry requirements vary. Some require specific qualifications; some require an initial assessment.

Apprentices will be paid a training wage (minimum £4.30 per hour) and work towards qualifications in NVQs, Functional Skills and Technical Certificates. Training can take place solely in the workplace or day or block release at college

It usually takes one year to complete a Level 2 and it should then be possible to move up to a Level 3

Level 3 (Advanced) Apprenticeship

This is an A level equivalent qualification

Entry requirements are usually 5 GCSEs grades 9-4, or completion of a Level 2 Intermediate Apprenticeship.

Apprentices will be paid a training wage (minimum £4.30 per hour) and work towards qualifications in NVQs, Functional Skills and Technical Certificates

It usually takes two years to complete a Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship and it should then be possible to move up to a Higher Apprenticeship or progress to a Foundation Degree at University or full-time employment.

Training can take place solely in the workplace or day or block release at college.

Traineeships for Young People

What is a Traineeship?

A traineeship is a course with work experience that gets you ready for work or an apprenticeship. It can last from 6 weeks up to 1 year, though most traineeships last for less than 6 months.

You'll get:

- help with getting work, such as writing a CV and finding a job
- a work placement of 70 hours or more
- help with the skills you'll need for an apprenticeship or job in the area you want to work in
- a job interview or feedback from an employer
- help with English, maths and basic digital skills (if you need it)

Visit <https://www.gov.uk/find-traineeship> to register and find out what work experience placement opportunities are available right now.

General Entry Requirements to Further Education / Training

To study Level 3 courses

Generally, students will need **5** grade **9-4 GCSE's** which **MUST** include **English** and **Maths**.

Some subjects at A Level will require student to gain at least a **6** at GCSE in that subject

To study Level 2 courses

Generally, students will need **3-5** grade **3 GCSE's**.

To study Level 1 courses and Entry level programmes

Students are not required to have formal qualifications but an aptitude and interest in the subject is essential.

Students should remember that they are entitled to up to three years free further education

This means students can start at the level that is right for them and progress on to the next level. There is also the option of the EPQ discussed earlier under the types of courses available.

When deciding which subjects to take, students must give careful thought as to what they want to do afterwards: some higher-level courses or employment opportunities require certain subjects at required levels, e.g., to become a doctor you will need to study Chemistry at A level.

It is useful to research possible University courses on www.ucas.com and on www.unifrog.org to check specific entry requirements

Open Evening Dates for your diary

Try to attend as many as possible to help make informed decisions about subjects and colleges.
Book to attend the open evenings via the college's website.

BACA

An academic & vocational college in Brighton - A Level and BTECs plus sports academies

Thursday 17th October

6-8pm

www.baca-uk.org.uk

BHASVIC

A 6th form college in Hove – A levels and BTECS

Wednesday 13th November

4-8pm

Thursday 14th November

4-8pm

www.bhasvic.ac.uk

BN1 Arts

A specialist music and performing arts college in Brighton

Saturday 28rd September

10am-12 & 1-3pm

<https://bn1arts.co.uk/>

BRIT School

A specialist performing arts college in Croydon

Thursday 24th September

1.30 onwards

<https://www.brit.croydon.sch.uk/>

Burgess Hill School for Girls

A private girls' school in Burgess Hill, scholarships available - A levels

Wednesday 2nd October

6-9pm

<https://burgesshillgirls.com/>

Chichester College Brinsbury Campus

A vocational college specialising in land-based courses at all levels

Saturday 12th October

10-1pm

www.chichester.ac.uk/brinsbury

Collyer's 6th Form College

A 6th form college in Horsham – A levels, BTECs, T levels

Wednesday 13th November

5-8.30pm

Thursday 14th November

5-8.30pm

www.collyers.ac.uk

Crawley College

A vocational college in Crawley offering all levels

Thursday 10th October

4.30–7pm

Saturday 9th November

10am-1pm

www.crawley.ac.uk

DV8

A specialist college in Brighton - Games Development, Digital Media and Music Production.

Wednesday 9th October

5-7pm

Saturday 12th October

10am-12

www.dv8sussex.com

East Sussex College

An academic & vocational college at Lewes, Eastbourne & Hastings - A levels, BTECs & T levels

A marine specialist college at Newhaven

Lewes

Thursday 17th October

4.30-7pm

Thursday 14th November

4.30-7pm

Eastbourne

Thursday 10th October

4.30-7pm

Thursday 7th November

4.30-7pm

Newhaven

Thursday 22nd October

4.30-6.30pm

www.escq.ac.uk

Haywards Heath College

A 6th form college in Haywards Heath – A Levels, BTECs and T levels

Monday 21st October

4.30–7pm

Tuesday 22nd October

4.30–7pm

www.haywardsheath.ac.uk

MET

A vocational college in Brighton

Wednesday 9th October

4.30-7.30pm

Saturday 23rd November

10–1pm

www.brightonmet.ac.uk

Newman College

A 6th form college in Hove - A Levels and BTECs plus academies in Sports, Maths and The Arts

Thursday 21st November

5-8pm

www.cncs.co.uk

Northbrook College

A vocational college in Worthing & Shoreham

Thursday 3rd October

4.30-7.30pm

Saturday 16th November

10-1pm

www.northbrook.ac.uk

Plumpton College

A specialist land-based college in Plumpton offering vocational courses at all levels.

Wednesday 25th September

5-7.30pm

Saturday 12th October

9-12pm

Saturday 23rd November

9-12pm

www.plumpton.ac.uk

Shoreham Academy 6th Form

An academic college - A Level and BTECs plus sports academies.

Thursday 2nd November

6-8pm

www.shoreham-academy.org

Sparsholt College

A vocational college in Hampshire - land based, motor vehicle, outdoor adventure, sport and butchery.

Saturday 5th October

tbc

Saturday 9th November

tbc

www.sparsholt.ac.uk

St Paul's Catholic 6th Form College

A 6th form college in Burgess Hill - A levels and BTECs

Thursday 10th October

6-8pm

www.stpaulssixthform.co.uk

Steyning Grammar School 6th Form

A 6th form college in Steyning – A levels and BTECs

Thursday 7th November

5-8pm

www.sgs.uk.net

Varndean College

A 6th form college in Brighton – A levels, BTECs, IBAC plus football academy

International Baccalaureate Open Evening only

Tuesday 8th October

6.30-7.45pm

Saturday 28th September

11-2pm

Wednesday 6th November

5-8pm

Thursday 7th November

5-8pm

www.varndean.ac.uk

Worthing College

An academic college in Worthing - A Level and BTECs plus academies for STEM, Visual Arts & Sports

Thursday 17th October

4.30-7pm

Tuesday 22nd October

4.30-7pm

www.worthing.ac.uk

How to Apply

College Applications

- **All college applications must be made by Friday 6th December.** Applications received after this date may be added to a waiting list.
- **Varndean and BHASVIC** have a new shared application form on line. **Apply via their individual websites – you CAN NOT apply to both BHASVIC and Varndean.**
- **Colleges have online application forms.** Check their individual website to fill out their application form. If you need any assistance with this, come and see Ms Hollingdale
- **Students are reminded that they should apply for more than one college** to keep their options open. If you are offered more than one place you can accept multiple offers and then reject the others later in the year.
- **Be realistic about your options** – are you going to get the entry requirements for the courses that you want to study? Some colleges are VERY strict about this. **If you are borderline for achieving the grades needed, apply for a plan B option (eg a level 2 course in a subject of interest)**

Apprenticeships

- Students considering an Apprenticeship should also apply to college as a 'back-up'. It is easier to withdraw from a place than to apply late if an Apprenticeship is not possible.
- Students should **register on-line** at <https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch> to be alerted of vacancies locally in their chosen occupational area. Students who wish to get an apprenticeship should approach employers in their chosen sector to gain employment.
- Students can also **register** for apprenticeships with the **ASK** programme who will be at the Find Your Path evening.
- Some local providers of apprenticeships will also be attending the Find Your Path evening so this is a good opportunity to talk to them directly about what they are looking for in an apprentice.

All Students

All colleges and apprenticeship providers will be dealing with you directly, **NOT** your parents.

This means it is vital that you do the following:

- **Make sure you include YOUR mobile number and a personal email address**
- **Do not give your school email as this will be closed after your leave Downlands**
- **Remember to check your emails regularly, including your junk folder!**

Colleges and providers will be trying to contact you to organise for you to attend interviews, or to discuss other issues, so keep a look out for messages from them.

Careers Advice and Guidance

Ms Hollingdale is available in her office every afternoon until 4pm. Please feel free to pop along if you want to discuss course choices, need assistance completing application forms or anything college / career related. If you want to discuss anything in more depth, please request a careers interview.

How do I choose?

- **If a student has a career in mind** – research to ensure that they study the required subjects and levels for that career. Use your Unifrog account for this
- **If they have no career in mind** - they should do what they are **good at / enjoy** and try to choose a range of subjects in order to keep their options open.
- Some courses have specific entry requirements, e.g., to study French / German A level you will need Grade 6 in that language at GCSE
- **Look at how the course is assessed**, % coursework / exams. Most A Levels will be 100% exam. Applied A Levels and BTECs will have practical and coursework elements as well as final exams. Ask yourself what works best for you.
- **Students are more likely to achieve good results if their choices suit their interests and abilities**
- Consider **transport** and how they will get to college.
- Does the college **‘feel right’**?
- How will the college support any **extra learning needs** you might have?
- **Results** – look at their results on their website for the subjects that you want to study. Research specific subject areas, not just the overall results for the whole college.
- Courses vary from college to college; make sure the college you choose offers the **modules** you want to study.
- What support and guidance do they offer for university applications or your chosen next step?

Interviews

Students will be invited to attend interviews at their chosen colleges **from December onwards**.

Colleges will send details of the interviews by either email or text, **it is very important that you check your emails regularly and give them an email address that you use and check – not your school email.**

Students will be required to take their **Year 10 reports** to their interviews, therefore please keep this safe!

If studying an **Art / Photography** subject, students may be required to take a portfolio of evidence with them.

If students have chosen **Dance / Performing Arts** they may be expected to attend an audition

Travel

College Transport for Students aged 16+

The County Council's policy is that it is normally the responsibility of parents to meet all transport costs for full-time students aged 16+ unless you have a ECHP. See www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-and-college-travel/help-with-transport/post-16-and-college-transport/ for more information.

Students travelling by rail can purchase the **16-17 rail card** – www.16-17saver.co.uk

This will give 50% discount on season tickets. The rail card costs £30 and is valid for one year. It will automatically expire on the student's 18th birthday, although season tickets bought before that date, will continue to be valid. Buy the card on line via the website and it can be downloaded as a phone APP, or the rail card will be posted to you on the day of purchase. Cards should be purchased on-line via the website.

Travel by bus –

Compass Travel buses - Young people aged 16 to 20 travelling in West Sussex can get a bus saver card - <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/travel-and-public-transport/bus-and-coach-travel/bus-passes-and-discounts/bus-it/16-to-20-bus-saver/>

Brighton & Hove buses – student discounts are available, see www.buses.co.uk for full details.

Financial Help

16-19 Bursary Fund

The Government has set aside some money for schools, colleges, training providers and local authorities to allocate to young people who need financial support to stay on in full and part-time further education or training. It can help with any education-related costs that may arise during the school year such as the cost of travel, uniforms, educational visits, books and equipment.

There are two types of bursaries:

Vulnerable student bursary – You could get up to £1,200 if at least one of the following applies:

- you're in or recently left local authority care
- you get Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- you get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- you get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either ESA or Universal Credit

Discretionary bursary – You can apply for a discretionary bursary if you are not eligible for a vulnerable bursary but you need financial help to stay on in further education or training. Your school, college or training provider will have its own eligibility criteria as their funds are limited and they need to make sure it gets to the students who most need financial help to stay on in further education or training. The eligibility criteria might be based on your family's income, whether your parents receive benefits, or whether you have previously been entitled to free school meals. Payment of bursaries will depend on attendance, behaviour and standard of work.

You should make an application as soon as you have decided where you are going to study. The sooner you apply, the sooner you will start to receive support. **Students should contact the student support services of the college they are going to.**

For further information visit <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

Emergencies and hardship

You might be able to get more support if your circumstances change or you have an emergency. Your provider might also have a separate hardship fund. Speak to student services if you need extra help.

Care to Learn

If you are under 20 and have a child of your own and are the main carer, you may be able to claim Care to Learn. This provides help with childcare and travel costs for young parents who are in education. For further details visit www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

West Sussex County Council

May be able to assist with certain costs for post 16 education (especially transport) where eligibility criteria are satisfied. 01243 526175 – pupil support office at WSCC.

Useful websites for further research

Unifrog

www.unifrog.org

All our students have access to this website which provides information on all aspects of finding educational and vocational providers, researching university placements here and abroad, gap year activities and everything else career related

UCAS

<https://www.ucas.com/>

University website to search degree courses, Universities and check entry requirements for **all** degree courses

Not Going to University

<https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>

Online apprenticeships guide that offers you advice on how to become an apprentice

All About School Leavers

<https://www.allaboutschooleavers.co.uk/>

Search for school leaver programmes, degree apprenticeships.

Informed Choices

<https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>

Use to help you understand which subjects open up different degrees, particularly at Russell Group universities.

Volunteering overseas

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk>

Fancy volunteering overseas? Have a look at this website for ideas on gap year projects.

Gap year options – travelling

www.yearoutgroup.org

Gap Year travel inspiration and advice

CareerMap

<https://careemap.co.uk/>

Information about apprenticeship vacancies as well as useful magazine about all career sectors

Your Space

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/your-space/>

A really useful West Sussex sponsored website for young people with information about careers and life choices.

Apprenticeships

<https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>

National Apprenticeship website has lists of current vacancies and more information on employers.

www.apprenticeships-in-sussex.com

A list of local training providers who support apprenticeships

National Careers Service

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers>

Is a government funded website offering careers information and job profiles.

Careers Box

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSYwOsyeCuWJDb8ak7HVGCG>

A free online library of careers related films, news and information. Match your skills to work and training opportunities.

STEM Careers

<https://www.careergirls.org/>

Although aimed at girls – useful information about careers in STEM – specifically Science based.

Highlights the huge range of career opportunities to anyone interested in science, technology, engineering and maths.

Careers in the NHS

<https://www.stepintothenhhs.nhs.uk/> and <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>

Did you know that there are over 350 careers available in the NHS? Do the career mapper quiz, research in the A-Z section

Creative Skillset

www.screenskills.com

For entertainment, media, fashion, textiles, publishing, advertising, marketing & communications. Job profiles and case studies in the creative industries.

Careers in Social Care

<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/>

To discover the career opportunities in this sector

Lantra

<http://www.lantra.co.uk/>

Check out careers in the land-based sector

icould.com

<http://icould.com/>

More than 1000 videos of real life people talking about their career journeys. Search by subject, job type or life theme. Take the Buzz Quiz to give career ideas that match your personality type.

Prospects

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk>

Research job profiles, take a careers quiz

Future Morph

<https://www.stem.org.uk/resources/collection/3338/future-morph>

This site provides information for young people about careers from studying science, maths and technology.

Hospitality Guild

<http://www.hospitalityguild.co.uk/>

Find out about careers in the hospitality industry.

Tomorrows Engineers

<http://www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/>

Find out about careers and degree courses in engineering

Wired Sussex

<http://www.wiredsussex.com/>

Check out the digital and media jobs / companies in Sussex

Ted Talks

<https://www.ted.com/>

TED Talks are influential videos from expert speakers on a huge range of subjects.

MOOC's

<https://www.futurelearn.com/> or <https://www.mooc-list.com/> Expand your learning by study a MOOC -

Massive Open Online Courses (free online courses) offered by the top universities and colleges in a wide range of subjects

Success at School

<https://successatschool.org/>

Lots of helpful information about CV writing, different career pathways, Gap years and much, much more

Creative Careers

www.discovercreative.careers

Lots of information about the vast range of careers in the creative industries. Links to many other useful websites too.

Fledglink

www.fledglink.com

A really useful app aimed at supporting young people with their choices and life skills.

Make the Future Yours

www.makethefutureyours.uk/issue-5

Free online magazine for parents and young people with information about careers and education options

Career Confident

<https://www.getcareerconfident.co.uk/>

Provides information, guidance and inspiration to young people aged 14 to 19.

Eric App

<https://www.meet-eric.com/>

Networking and information about careers across the creative industries