



Advice on the options after A Levels

While thousands of young people may be celebrating their A Level results there will be thousands more who are reconsidering their options.

The Connexions Careers Service provided by igen in North Yorkshire, will be giving advice to young people about their options if they did not achieve the results they needed to get onto the degree course they wanted, or have decided that a degree is not the option for them.

There are many choices available, including other qualifications, apprenticeships, employment or gap years. There is no one option that fits everyone, instead it is picking the option that best suits your needs.

igen's Connexions Careers Advisers offer the following advice:

Before deciding on any alternative plan you need to give your options careful thought.

Different Approaches to Higher Education

Institutions –

If your offers are not confirmed you may find a similar course at another institution. Remember many Further Education colleges offer Foundation degrees and HND's linked to universities. Check the course content carefully, is it what you want?

Subject -

You may like to consider a different subject; less popular subjects often have both vacancies and lower entry requirements. Joint, combined or modular degrees may allow you to mix your preferred subject with others, although entry requirements may be similar. Look for related subjects e.g. American Studies includes both history and literature.

You may be offered a place on a different degree by one of your chosen universities; you are under no obligation to accept this. Check alternative courses out carefully before deciding.

Level of course

you may need to start at a lower level, many of these courses can lead to a degree

Diploma of Higher Education

This is a two year course, equivalent to the first two years of a degree and usually requires 2 A levels or equivalent. It may be possible to progress to the third year of a degree course from this. There are however a limited range of subjects available.

Higher National Diploma (HND) –

This is a vocational two year course requiring at least 1 A level or equivalent (3 year sandwich courses available). It may be possible to convert an HND to a degree in one year, or to transfer to the second year of a degree on completion of the HND.

Foundation Degrees-

This is a 2 year work related higher education qualification, for example business, engineering, ICT or Childcare.

Foundation courses –

These are available as a preliminary to some degrees. They offer the opportunity to change discipline or to build on 1 A level pass. They are often in shortage subjects such as science and engineering. You can also check whether the course is eligible for a student loan.

A Year Off –

you may decide to take a year out to widen your choice or allow you to improve your results. You must contact the institution and negotiate deferred entry or withdraw from UCAS and re-apply the following year. You can spend your year travelling, doing voluntary work, studying or working to provide finance for Higher Education.

If you decide to re-apply next year check the times when you need to be available and plan around them. Leave plenty of time free in September for research. Check with your ex school or college to see if they will process your application and provide an academic reference.

Your new application will require details of your previous application. You will also have to list all attempts at exams even where you were unsuccessful. Unless you are re-taking exams your offer will be based on your existing qualifications, this will be unconditional. Probably you will know where you stand by March or April so you may prefer to plan any travelling for later.

Re-taking A levels -

You may just re-take modules by arrangement with your school/college or do the whole year again. Offers are often higher for candidates who have re-taken exams. Check the views of admissions tutors for degrees which interest you. Consider what you hope to gain and can you improve your grades?

Voluntary Work -

This may be in the UK or abroad. You may wish to combine voluntary work in the UK with study or part time paid employment.

Alternatives to Higher Education

Employment -

You may consider this either as an alternative or as a means of filling in a GAP year. You may wish to register for work at the local Connexions Hub to gain access to our vacancies, mainly for 16 - 19 year olds; at the Job Centre; or with local employment agencies. Jobs which offer training towards vocational or professional qualifications, sometimes through day release, can be good alternatives to Higher Education.

Advanced Apprenticeships

These are jobs with guaranteed training to NVQ level 3 and possibly higher. The majority are for 16-18 year olds but some take people up to the age of 24. In addition to job related training you would continue to study key skills.

Advanced Apprenticeships are available in many areas of work, they may be offered direct by employers or through organisations, known as training providers, who recruit on behalf of a number of employers. You can call into the Connexions Hub for help in finding an Apprenticeship. Some Apprenticeships also offer training towards professional qualifications e.g. the Association of Accounting Technicians qualification.

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