

Pathways at 18 – audio transcript

Slide 1: Introduction

Hello everyone. My name is Nicky Rogers, and I work at UWE Bristol as a Pre-HE careers adviser in the Widening Access team. We work with local schools and colleges to support students, like yourself, to explore your options and plan for your next steps after you finish your course. This session includes some activities where you can pause the recording, have a go, then restart the video afterwards.

At the end of this session, if you have any questions for us, we have a UWE Bristol Pre-HE team email address that we will give you to contact us on. We'd be happy to try and help you if we can. We hope you find our sessions useful.

Slide 2: Session overview

Today I'm going to give you an overview of the key features of each of the main options open to you at the end of Level 3 (i.e. your A Level or BTEC course). This should help you start to consider which might be the right route for you. I'll also highlight some useful resources, like Careerpivot, which you can use to find out more to help you make up your mind.

Slide 3: Options at 18

These are the options we'll be looking at today. You may already have an idea of your next step, or you may not have a clue, particularly when there has been so much uncertainty recently. Different routes will suit different people and I think one of the key messages from today is that you need to spend a good amount of time researching *all* the options. If you do this, you can make an *informed decision* about which pathway is best for you and have a plan B just in case.

Slide 4: Which is the right pathway?

Look at the jobs shown on this slide, and decide whether you need to take a degree, an apprenticeship, or whether you can do either route to get into this job.

So, for a solicitor, it's possible to progress without a degree. You can do an apprenticeship in legal work, although vacancies for these are very competitive, and training to qualify has changed recently.

For a dentist – you need a degree, there is no current apprenticeship route.

An aerospace engineer requires a degree or this can now be achieved via a degree apprenticeship.

An IT or business degree, or a degree apprenticeship in digital marketing would be useful for an SEO – it's about having the right skill set, rather than a particular qualification.

Since 2020 you need to have a degree to become a police officer, but you can also achieve this through a degree apprenticeship.

To be a landscape architect – a degree or postgraduate qualification is needed. There is currently only a Level 3 apprenticeship as a landscape technician, but a Level 7 chartered landscape professional apprenticeship is in development.

Qualification as a plumber is through an apprenticeship only.

Broadcast journalist is mainly a graduate job, but it is occasionally possible to progress with experience.

This shows that there are often a variety of routes into careers and these can change over time, so don't assume that you know the best route. Make sure you do your research first.

Slide 5: Higher Education

In terms of university there is a vast array of options open to you – over 50,000 different courses available at over 390 different institutions. There are a number of reasons to consider HE as an option.

Slide 6: Some careers require a degree

Firstly, some careers require a degree. The ones shown here are 'graduate only' career choices, some of which require a specific named degree in that subject. If you are interested in these particular jobs, then you will *have to* get a degree. Although some degree apprenticeships may be available, they can be hard to get, so going to uni will be the quickest and most straightforward way to get the qualifications for entry.

Slide 7: Some graduate opportunities don't require a specific degree

Some jobs that require a degree don't mind which subject you studied. A number of large employers offer graduate schemes but in a recent survey of large graduate recruiters, only 14% required a particular subject. Many career areas simply prefer students who've shown they are capable of studying successfully at degree level (and don't actually mind what subject that degree is in). Some examples are on this slide.

Slide 8: Types of degree subject

There are 3 main types of degree subject: those linked to an occupation or career, which are vocational, those academic subjects with no links to a particular work area that are non-vocational, and those which have applications to a general career area, rather than a specific job role, which are semi-vocational. A less vocational course gives you more flexibility if you are undecided.

Graduates from all these different types of subjects will develop a core set of employability skills that are valued by employers (regardless of degree discipline).

Slide 9: What did they study?

So, can you identify the subject that all of these graduates studied? The answer is Geography – a subject that develops a range of *transferable skills* that can be useful in a wide range of jobs.

Slide 10: What could you earn?

In contrast to some media reports, there are well paid professional roles available. The Graduate Jobs website estimated £21-25K as the average starting salary (based on the salaries advertised in their job ads).

Also, being in a professional job, your earnings can increase quite quickly, with a graduate premium of £10,000 per year on average over a lifetime, and a degree also gives you greater flexibility over working arrangements and the ability to work from home, which has been key during recent times. Employment during the recent crisis was impacted far less for those in higher paying jobs, compared with those in lower paying jobs, where it was also harder to work remotely.

Slide 11: What does HE cost?

Cost shouldn't be a barrier to attending uni as annual tuition fees (up to £9,250/year) are covered by a student loan, regardless of household income. There is also a living cost loan, which takes into account household income and what your parents might be able to contribute.

The repayment of these loans depends entirely on what you are earning, so you never pay more than you can afford. Look at the question on the slide.

You won't start repaying loans until you earn over £27,295/yr. Repayments are only 9% of the amount you earn over that amount. This is £12.80 at £29,000 and £20.30 on a salary of £30,000. It is estimated that over 80% of students will never pay their student loans back in full as what you owe is written off (i.e. cancelled) after 30 years.

Slide 12: What HE qualifications are there?

You may not be aware that there are a range of qualifications you can take in Higher Education. Most people start with the degree, the BSc or BA, which you can see in the middle of this table. Some courses have an integrated foundation year or 'Year 0' which is helpful if you haven't got the right grades or subjects to go straight into Year 1. Sandwich degrees give you an opportunity to work in industry as part of your degree, so

take an extra year; some degrees (usually in STEM subjects) have an integrated Masters, so you spend 4 years studying, rather than 3.

Foundation degrees (in vocational subjects such as business, animal management or media production) are equivalent to the first two years of a degree. They can be topped-up to Honours degree level by a third year at university or college. Alongside these are HNC – equivalent to Yr 1 of a degree and HND equivalent to yr 2 – in work-related subjects, such as electrical engineering, computer systems support or health studies practice. Often taught in colleges, these also offer progression to a full degree.

Because of this range, you don't necessarily need amazing grades to access Higher Education. There are a range of possible options you can progress onto.

Slide 13: Useful websites for HE research

Here are some reliable websites you can use to research and compare your higher education options – they are also available on a downloadable handout on our schools and college pages.

Slide 14: Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are definitely a viable alternative to university for some students.

Slide 15: What do apprenticeships involve?

Apprenticeships involve a combination of “earning and learning”. The duration depends on the level of the apprenticeship, the apprentice's ability and the industry sector, but they will last a minimum of 12 months. Some offer in-house training or day release or block release to a college, higher education or training centre or distance learning alternative. You will work towards an apprenticeship standard, involving on and off the job study which may include a nationally recognized qualification. This will also involve an assessment at the end of the apprenticeship.

Slide 16: Types of apprenticeship

A huge range of apprenticeship opportunities may be available – over 500 different types in total. On the screen are just some of the advanced (or level 3) apprenticeship standards (including some fairly specific things available that you might not necessarily have considered before).

But you do have to know what role you want to do! This is because your training will be focused on a specific industry or role. Work experience can be helpful to test whether the type of work suits you before you commit.

Slide 17: Where are the apprenticeship opportunities?

Some career areas have lots of apprenticeship opportunities available (e.g. engineering, IT and business) and across different levels of study, whereas others have very few. Compare the numbers of apprenticeship starts on the slide.

Data also shows us that more than half the number of apprenticeship starters were already working for the employer before becoming apprentices, so you may have to take other steps, such as getting an entry level job, before you can secure the apprenticeship.

Slide 18: Apprenticeship levels

Many apprenticeships start at Level 2 with a chance to progress to Level 3 (Advanced level) and beyond to Level 4. Some can be started on Level 3. Entry requirements depend on the sector and your prior skills – even with A levels you may be expected to start at intermediate level.

Slide 19: Apprenticeship earnings

Have a go at the question on the slide. The minimum wage for an apprentice is £4.30 per hour - which is £159.10 per week. Many apprentices receive more than this: in fact, the average salary for advanced apprentices is £17,700 per year and figures for intermediate level apprentices can vary from £9,000-16,000 per year. For an 18 year-old in work, the minimum wage is £6.56/hour (but with no guarantee of any investment in training).

Slide 20: Degree apprenticeships

Launched in 2015, there has been a huge growth in the range and number of degree apprenticeships (which is where the qualification you gain during your apprenticeship is a degree). Employers can attract new talent — particularly high calibre school and college-leavers who are keen to earn a degree in a work-based environment. The average starting salary for a degree apprentice is £18,800 per year, but it is up to the employer to determine the wage, where and what degree you will study. Competition can be tough from school and college leavers as well as adults already in employment and entry is often through a multi-stage selection process, so you need to be organised and good at time management to fit this in during your Year 13 studies.

Slide 21: Types of degree apprenticeship

Here are some degree apprenticeship examples — make a note of any you might be interested in. Also, consider how you will manage working in the job and studying at degree level at the same time.

Slide 22: Where to look for apprenticeship vacancies

Search for vacancies on the government 'Find an Apprenticeship' website to get a sense of what is available. However, some large companies prefer to use their own websites, so do check with any specific companies of interest. As with HE courses, pay attention to the skills, qualities and experience required, so you can make a plan to fill any gaps before you need to apply. Remember you can apply for both Higher Education and apprenticeships and make up your mind later about which route you feel will suit you best.

Slide 23: Employment

Moving on to the employment option.

Slide 24: Will I be able to get a job?

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy has meant that many more companies are using the apprenticeship route to recruit. But there are still some companies who are prepared to offer a good salary, excellent training and a permanent job, particularly in the accounting and finance, IT, and engineering sectors.

Slide 25: Employee jobs by sector

It is hard to predict an accurate picture as the figures in this graph show the economy before the pandemic and we know many people have lost their jobs. That said, there are skills shortage areas where vacancies remain high, and there are companies offering school and college leaver schemes. You can start to think about what local opportunities might be, which sector is the biggest recruiter, and whether there are any local hot spots, such as those in the red circles.

Slide 26: Will I be able to get a job?

Here are some examples of companies that were still recruiting school and college leavers throughout the pandemic. Retail and hospitality were particularly impacted by the lockdowns, but traditionally recruit school and college leavers, and customer service is a feature of many other industries.

Slide 27: Looking for job vacancies

As with finding an apprenticeship, half the battle with job searching is knowing where to look for vacancies, to make sure you're not missing any good opportunities. Think about who you/your family know that might be able to help. Try websites such as Job Centre Plus, Indeed, CV library, and the websites of large local employers. Bear in mind that not all jobs are advertised. Consider sending a CV and cover letter speculatively to target employers and check social media sites such as Linked In, the professional social media platform.

Slide 28: Taking a year out

I'll give a brief overview of the gap year options now, but again, there are lots of useful sites that offer advice, ideas and guidance on this pathway.

Slide 29: Why take a gap year?

Perhaps you need time to make choices, build self-confidence, maturity and self-awareness as well as find out more about what options are available. Or maybe you want a refresh – a break from study to widen horizons and build skills and do different things can help to refresh and revitalise you before committing to 3-4 years of hard study. Perhaps you haven't had the chance to get the work experience you needed to make a really strong UCAS application, or you want to try out your ideas before committing to studying a subject.

Here are some results from a survey of people who took a gap year, which show they found it pretty worthwhile.

Slide 30: How to use your year out wisely

Often, young people will do a combination of the options shown on this slide e.g. saving money through paid work to finance travel / overseas activities later on.

Workwise, you may be able to increase your hours at your current part time employer. There are seasonal roles in the UK or overseas paid opportunities such as ski seasons, hospitality roles or au pairing.

You can apply for schemes such as the Year in Industry which offers students a 12-month opportunity to gain professional development by working at a reputable company. Alternatively, unpaid work experience might be a way to gain the experience needed to get onto your degree course.

Voluntary work is also a great way to spend your gap year time. There are loads of possibilities – teaching, conservation, healthcare, developing communities and so on which can be accessed directly or through a range of gap year organisations. Travel is also very common and is often combined with voluntary work, but flexibility is key, as Coronavirus restrictions change. In addition to these, you could use the time to gain skills, such as learning to drive, or study part or full-time to enhance your qualifications.

Slide 31: Research available gap schemes

Here are some examples of popular gap year activities during the pandemic. It's worth researching the different schemes before Year 13. If you do this, you'll be up to speed on key points such as when you need to apply and how you need to prepare. For example, you may need to go through various selection processes, or raise funds, get injections or visas for travel.

Slide 32: Useful websites: gap year

There are a range of websites offering gap year opportunities and advice – see the year out section on Careerpilot.

Slide 33: Summary of key points

In summary, take time to weigh up the pros and cons of each option – they will vary in terms of what these are and their relative importance to you as an individual. In particular, research whether you need a degree for your chosen career. Find out whether it is possible to take an apprenticeship and get to the same level. Remember the importance of Plan A and Plan B – sometimes things don't quite work out, so you'll need a back-up.

Slide 34: Questions

If you have any questions about the topics I've covered today, please email us at the address on the slide – prehecareersadviser@uwe.ac.uk, using your school or college email address. We'll help as much as we can. I hope you found the session useful. Many thanks for listening and good luck in the future.