

Pathways at 18 – audio transcript

Slide 1: Introduction

Hello everyone. My name is Nicky Rogers, and I work at UWE Bristol, as a careers adviser in the pre-HE careers team. We work with local schools and colleges in the area to support students, like yourself, with exploring your options and planning for your next steps after you finish your current courses.

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 you can use to find out more to help you make up your mind. It can take a while to get all the information to make your decision, and some of the opportunities and deadlines come around quite quickly so starting to look at options now will help you get an idea of what you need to do to take control of your way forward. A good resource for all your options is Careerpilot, which additionally has a South West focus. Useful websites will be listed on the slides with the research image shown here.

Slide 3: Options at 18

The slide shows 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: Quiz

To make the session more interactive there will be a number of quiz questions for you to try and answer. Where you see the quiz sign, pause the video and have a go at the question before restarting to reveal the answers.

Slide 5: Which is the right pathway?

Here's the first question to get your teeth into. For each of the jobs shown on the slide, decide whether you need to take a degree, an apprenticeship, or whether you can do either route to get into this job.

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

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.

Games developer is increasingly becoming a graduate job, but it's possible to get into with lots of experience and the right skill set.

From 2020 all new police officers in England and Wales have to be educated to degree level. This can be via a policing degree (offered at 12 unis), a degree apprenticeship or a 6-month postgraduate conversion course if you have another degree.

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. There are production assistant and junior content producer apprenticeships.

Did you get them all right? There are often a variety of routes into careers and these can change over time, so you don't assume that you know the best route. Make sure you do your research first.

Slide 6: 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. The task for students applying to university is to whittle these down to a final 5 choices for the UCAS form. There are a number of reasons to consider university as an option, which we explore in more detail in our Why go? session.

Slide 7: 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 8: 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 (i.e. only open to those who've gained a degree) such as John Lewis, Sky, Asda, GSK, British Airways and so on. In fact, 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 9: 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. If you are unsure of what you want to do, or want to keep options open, it is advisable to choose less vocational courses to give yourself more flexibility.

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 10: What did they study?

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

Slide 11: What could you earn?

Now have a go at the 2 questions on the slide. What do you think new graduate roles were paying last year? Of course, we have to rely on data from 2019, but in contrast to some media reports, there are usually decent paid 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. Government figures show that graduates in the South West earn 22% more than non-graduates.

Slide 12: Flexibility

A degree also gives you greater flexibility over working arrangements and correlates with higher earnings and the ability to work from home, which has been key during recent times. Employers expect that the proportion of people working from home on a regular basis once the crisis is over will increase to 37% compared to 18% before the pandemic. Employment during the recent crisis was unchanged for those in higher paying jobs, compared with those in lower paying jobs, where it was also harder to work remotely.

Slide 13: What does HE cost?

One of the key issues often cited by students as a potential barrier to considering or attending uni is the cost. However, annual tuition fees (which is how much you have to pay to study, which is usually £9,250/year) are covered by a non means-tested loan. This means it is available to all eligible students 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 maximum living cost loan is £9,203 / year if studying outside London, or £12,000 per year if living away from home and studying in London. 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 £26,575/yr. Repayments are only 9% of the amount you earn over £26,575. This is £16 per month at a salary of £28,800 and £25 on a salary of £30,000. It is estimated that more than 4/5 (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 14: 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.

It's important to make it clear that you don't necessarily need amazing grades to access Higher Education. There are a range of possible options you can progress onto.

Slide 15 HE application timeline

In terms of what you need to do and by when, Year 12 is the time for research and preparing to apply, taking advantage of any access opportunities, open days etc. offered by universities.

In Year 13 apply you need to apply via UCAS. The deadline is 15th October for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses or by 15th January for any other courses.

You can actually make a late UCAS application for up to 5 choices up until 30th June. Clearing, which is where universities try to fill remaining spaces on their courses, opens in early July for unplaced applicants. So although you can leave things until the last minute, you'll definitely limit your choices and there may be a knock-on delay sorting out student accommodation and finance. Therefore, even if you feel less inclined to take the HE option, if you still do the groundwork now, it'll make it much easier if you change your mind later.

Slide 16: 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 the downloadable handout.

Slide 17: Apprenticeships

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

Slide 18: 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 19: 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 that you might not necessarily have considered before). So please be aware that it’s not just the vocational areas that a lot of people think of like construction, hairdressing etc) - there’s much more than that.

But remember, you do have to know what job 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 20: 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. However, this is not the case in all apprenticeship areas such as working with children or care roles, where many of the opportunities are at the lower apprenticeship levels and are often not paid quite so well. Also, the availability of an apprenticeship standard does not necessarily mean there will be a lot of opportunities in that sector.

Here, the figures on the left are for the South West. For roles in art/media/animal care – don’t expect to see vacancies advertised, you may have to go out and generate opportunities by approaching employers yourself. You need to consider also the levels of competition for popular vacancies. The second chart shows that more than half the number of apprenticeship starts were by existing staff so you may have to take other steps, such as getting an entry level job, before you can secure the apprenticeship.

Slide 21: 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 at Level 3 or above. Entry requirements depend on the sector and your prior skills – even with A levels you may be expected to start at intermediate level.

Slide 22: Apprenticeship earnings

Have a go at the question on the slide. The minimum wage for an apprentice is £4.15 per hour - which is £153.60 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, according to a survey of apprentice reviews (remember how many apprentice starts were already employees, therefore earning above the apprentice minimum wage). For an 18 year-old in work, the minimum wage is £6.45/hour (but with no guarantee of any investment in training).

Slide 23: 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-leavers who are keen to earn a degree in a work-based environment. The average starting salary for a degree apprentice in 2019 was £17,800 per year, according to Incomes Data Research (IDR). Competition can also be tough from school and college leavers as well as adults already in employment.

Slide 24: Types of degree apprenticeship

Here are some degree apprenticeship examples – make a note of any you might be interested in.

Slide 25: Degree apprenticeship examples

In these 2 examples of degree apprenticeship vacancies, you'll see how they stipulate where you must study and the specific qualification you'll gain. It's also important to consider how you will manage working in the job and studying at degree level at the same time.

Slide 26: Healthcare sector example

Here's a recent NHS vacancy for comparison of salary and study conditions; in the job advert, they refer to skills, values and service users, in addition to the qualifications shown here. Entry to degree apprenticeships 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 27: Where to look for apprenticeship vacancies

Most apprenticeship vacancies are on the government 'Find an Apprenticeship' website so it's worth checking this for 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 28: Employment

Moving on to the employment option.

Slide 29: 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 30: 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 that there are many people who have now 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 now start to think about what the local opportunities might be, which sector is the biggest recruiter, and whether there are any local hot spots.

Slide 31: Will I be able to get a job?

Here are some examples of companies that were still recruiting school and college leavers through the pandemic. Retail and hospitality, sectors that traditionally recruit school and college leavers, are still reeling from the impact of the lockdown, but customer service is still a feature of many other industries.

Slide 32: 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 or your family know that might be able to help. Try websites such as Job Centre Plus, Indeed, CV library, TotalJobs, Monster, National Apprenticeship Service, 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 Linked In, the professional social media platform.

Work experience can often lead to an offer of employment and temping work via a recruitment agency can lead to more permanent roles as well as help you to develop experience. These operate mostly via online job boards now, and large agencies such as Reed give job hunting advice and sometimes practice aptitude tests.

Slide 33: Taking a year out

There are a vast array of options for a gap year - too much to cover in detail today. I'll give a brief overview but again, there are lots of useful sites that offer advice, ideas and guidance on this option.

Slide 34: 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 or 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. They place students in top UK companies every year, including Shell, Rolls-Royce, EDF, Network Rail and GKN. 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. 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 35: Gap year questions quiz

Quiz time again. Guess the statistics from a survey of students who took a gap year.

Slide 36: Gap year questions answered

Here are the answers; now think about the pros and cons for you of taking a gap year.

Slide 37: Research available gap schemes

It's worth researching the different gap year 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 38: Useful websites: gap year

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

Slide 39: 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. Unfortunately, retirement at 18 isn't an option, all of the pathways will require you to work!!

Slide 40: 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. We'll help as much as we can. It's really important to point out though that you must email us from your school or college email account, rather than a personal account, otherwise we won't be able to reply. We look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks for listening and good luck in the future.