

Making Choices after Year 11

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.

There's also a handout with useful information and links you can download to support the information given. We hope you find our sessions useful.

Slide 2: Today's session

Today we're going to be talking about your future, about the possibilities that await you at the end of Y11 and about the decisions that you need to make.

Some of you will know already what you want to do next year but for others you still might not know at all, or maybe you are deciding between different subjects or courses. In the next 10 minutes or so, I'm going to outline what your options are so that you can make an informed choice about your next step.

Slide 3: Reflection

You've got plenty of time to make decisions, starting to think about this early is a great idea. How do you feel right now starting to consider your future and the decisions you will need to make? You may identify with one or more of the pictures on the screen, or maybe you feel that there are others' expectations weighing on you. It's really important to plan ahead so that you end up doing something that works for you, something that excites you, that motivates you. We'll be looking at how you can really own your decision, and embrace it and say with conviction 'that's the best choice for me'.

Slide 4: Who earns the most?

Look at the starting salary for each of the jobs on the slide and how much this could go up to with experience. When you are considering where you would like to work, money may be an important factor, but it isn't the only one.

Slide 5: What else is important?

You may have realised through doing work experience or talking to family members, that some of these other factors can also be really important in terms of your happiness and well-being in your job. Try interviewing your teachers and others you know about these factors and the impact on they have on work satisfaction – different factors will matter more or less, according to the individual.

Slide 6: So, what floats your boat?

So, it's worth taking some time to think about what will make you happy in work (as well as getting paid)! Maybe you have a strong vocation, a desire to do a particular kind of work. You need to choose what's right for you based on your individual interests, values, strengths and preferences. It's also important to consider your personal circumstances and whether you have the support to make your dreams a reality, including what you need and how you can overcome any difficulties. Your choices will also depend to an extent on the opportunities available to you and we'll start to look at these on the next slide. You'll see there are a number of websites you can use to help you identify your interests when it comes to career decisions, so do check these out by downloading the handout.

Slide 7: Overview of pathways at 16: Where can you go?

There are a number of places you can go after Year 11. You can stay at school and attend sixth form, or attend your local sixth form college, or another school's sixth form. You can go to college or a specialist provider, for example a UTC or studio school, or you can go straight into a workplace with an employer. You have to continue in learning until you are 18, so even if you get a job, this must allow for some accredited training or time off for study.

Slide 8: Where are 16-18 year olds studying or working?

This slide gives a quick rundown of where 16-18 year-olds were.

Slide 9: Overview of pathways at 16: What next?

We've looked at where you could go, now we're going to look in a little more detail at what the options are.

- A-Levels are further academic study, usually in three subjects, and assessed by exams at end of the two year course.
- BTEC and other L3 Extended or Technical Diplomas (that may be awarded by UAL, City & Guilds, NCFE or Early Years Educator) are a course equivalent to 3 A-Levels in one general vocational area but they are not specific to a particular job e.g. health and social care, early years, engineering, computing, business, art and design, creative media etc. You usually study 18 units over two years, assessed by coursework and fewer exams than A-Levels. T-Levels are new qualifications being phased in over time for different subject areas, similar to BTEC, involving a large amount of timetabled work experience.
- Some colleges and sixth forms offer combinations of 6-unit BTECs and A-Levels.

- Craft courses from entry up to Level 3 are a more practical route that focuses on coursework and practical assessments and are available in areas such as construction crafts, plumbing, electrical and brickwork, hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy, professional cookery, animal care and more. Level 3 may be completed as part of apprenticeship, or full time, depending on the subject area.
- Apprenticeships are available from Level 2. You undertake training while you are doing a specific paid job where you have a contract with an employer and a training provider. They are a great opportunity for those who already know what career they want.
- As we've already mentioned, going into work, paid or unpaid, at 16 requires the role to have some form of accredited training attached to it, or a programme of study averaging a day a week, at least.

Provided you gain a level 3 qualification, each route can lead to university or higher-level training and qualifications.

For students needing more support to get to level 1 or 2, there are foundation programmes available at college to develop your skills. Similarly, if you're not yet ready to start an apprenticeship, you may be able to take a traineeship. These programmes last up to six months and include work preparation training, a high-quality work placement and, if necessary, help with your English and maths. Although unpaid, you may be funded for expenses such as travel costs.

Slide 10: Degree or apprenticeship

Taking our example jobs, there may be just one, or several pathways into them.

Slide 11: Answers to pathways

So, to get into law, say as a solicitor, you can take the academic or work-based pathway, whereas you must take a degree in dentistry to become a dentist, and an apprenticeship in carpentry to become a carpenter. You don't have to do a degree to get into journalism or games design, but it helps you develop skills for these competitive fields, especially where there isn't a specific apprenticeship available. Degree apprenticeships are expanding into more and more occupations, but remember that even if the pathway exists you still have to find an employer vacancy and go through selection for the role.

Slide 12: Pathways to qualifications

Here is a summary of pathways at 16; from GCSEs, you could take a traditional or vocational route to gain higher qualifications. A key message is that you can change pathways as you go forwards.

Slide 13: Making an informed decision

The second part of this session is going to focus on how to make the right choice for you. Would you prefer sixth form, college, apprenticeship, or a job? Currently, you're entitled to free education until you are 19, after which restrictions apply – so it's important to choose the best option for you.

Slide 14: Recipe for a good decision

How can you make an informed decision? Here is a recipe with all the steps needed.

Slide 15: Five steps to an informed decision

Firstly, write down all your options – we looked at these earlier. Find out as much about each option as possible - What can you do to find out more about each option? Perhaps research courses and opportunities online, read prospectuses, attend open days and sixth form evenings, speak to teachers, careers staff, other older students, family, friends etc. Think about the pros and cons of each option for you – what's good and bad about each option from a personal perspective. Put the options in rank order of preference. Finally, decide (and have a back-up plan) – you might need a Plan B if something changes to your original plan or you don't get the grades you'd hoped for – you may also change your mind so it's helpful to plan for both options.

Slide 16: Advice on choosing courses

Maybe you've always had a career dream in mind – you've always wanted to be a doctor, for example. That will and should affect the choices you make this year. If you have a profession in mind, find out as much as you can about it now so as to avoid spending years doing something that you really don't like and doesn't suit you. You can find out more by using the online careers sites on the handout to find out what the job involves, the key subjects and entry requirements. Also, you can talk to people you know already in the profession. If possible, try to get some work experience or voluntary work in this job during your free time or school holidays.

But for those of you who don't have a specific career in mind, you're probably going to be making your decision based on what you know you're good at, what you enjoy doing and find interesting, and how you learn and achieve best. You're going to be keeping your options open for a little bit longer.

Both types of decisions are good and valid. Not many people actually know what they want to do at 16. It's more usual to choose subjects that you're good at and that you enjoy than to base your choices on a specific career, so don't worry if you have no idea what you want to do in the future – that's perfectly normal.

Slide 17: Now pick up your ingredients

There's a great choice of subjects available to study and a huge range of areas you could do an apprenticeship or work in. It can be really difficult to decide on what might be best for you and there will be lots of things that will influence your decision. It is important to think about what inspires, motivates, and interests you. You will need to thoroughly research each subject or area of work, to make sure that what is involved is actually what you think it is.

Good reasons for you are not necessarily the same as for other people. Take a look at the statements on the slide and decide which are important for you; note that there some reasons that are more questionable.

Slide 18: Now pick up your ingredients

Although your parents, best friend etc recommend an option it might not be to your taste. You'll be the one living with your decision so it should be a positive choice you make based on accurate information.

Slide 19: Are you ready for the world of work?

Here is a checklist to run through if you are looking at work or an apprenticeship as your first option. Do you know how to write a CV and covering letter? Can you make good quality applications? Do you know where to look for apprenticeship and job vacancies, and what is your back-up plan in case you can't find a suitable opportunity?

Slide 20: Still need some help?

If you are still not sure which direction to take, don't worry, it's perfectly normal. There is lots of help available to you. Think about how you will get more help and start to plan your research.

Slide 21: Further information

Careerpilot is a good starting point as it's kept up to date with accurate, impartial information on all the options.

Slide 22: Further advice and guidance

As is the National Careers Service, which also offers careers guidance via telephone and webchat, in addition to the website.

Slide 23: Look out for new possibilities

Being aware of innovations and developments of today might also generate ideas to explore.

Driverless cars, curing cancer, technology advanced limbs...could this be you?

Slide 24: Key points to finish

You can find out more about all the options we've run through today using the links in the downloadable handout. Try to gain some experiences of work and talk to people about their jobs. Compare the options, reflecting on your preferences and keep an open mind; ideas change, requirements for jobs change and local and global events can have an impact too.

Many thanks for listening and good luck in the future.