

TARGET
careers

**Paths to
Professional
Careers**
a Parent's Guide

Published by 

In partnership with





'I've always had a passion for languages and for travel. I felt that with my strong languages background, adding a finance dimension would enable me to become a well-rounded business leader.'

Carol Handa

ICAEW Chartered Accountant
Finance Director, Operations
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Careers in accountancy – a foreword from ICAEW

ICAEW is delighted to partner with TARGETcareers for the third year running on *Paths to Professional Careers – a Parent's Guide*. This guide has been developed to support parents of young people aged 15 to 18 who intend to sit their A levels, Scottish Highers or International Baccalaureate, so that you can help your children make the best career choices.

We're proud to be part of this year's guide and we hope that it will help to inform you about all of the possible routes your child can take to start their career. We understand that in the rapidly changing world of work it can be difficult to stay atop of the various routes into careers, and to stay as informed as possible on all of the options.

Careers in accountancy and business continue to be a popular choice for students at school leaver and graduate level, and it is no surprise that students are selecting these careers, given the range of opportunities available to qualified chartered accountants.

ICAEW is a world-leading professional membership organisation and we are committed to delivering our qualification, the ACA, to aspiring chartered accountants and business professionals all over the world. We work with c.5,000 employers globally to support talented school leavers and graduates through the ACA qualification, which is a combination of practical work experience, exams, ethics and professional development.

Students can qualify as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant straight from school or after university. The employers we work with are actively recruiting from a range of degree subjects, and students can train for the ACA and become an ICAEW Chartered Accountant regardless of which degree they study.

We hope you are able to use this guide as a point of reference for direction and guidance when it comes to supporting your child's career and study choices.

Lynne Hamilton-Gow

*Head of marketing and student recruitment,
ICAEW*



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Netball player



Athletics coach



Leader



Communicator

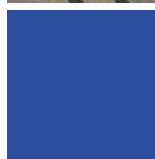
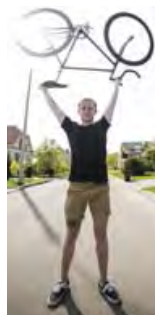
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AND ALWAYS WORK TOGETHER AS
A TEAM TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS.”**

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‘Completing the ACA will open so many doors. I've gained great leadership skills which have helped me to excel in the business.’

George Eaton, ACA student, Senior Associate at PwC

For details on the ACA qualification from ICAEW, visit icaew.com/parents



How to support your child's journey

Help your child get their bearings as they choose their career direction.

'Always keep an open mind. The world of work is rapidly changing and there's a range of routes available for your child to start their career journey – it's all about finding the right fit for them and supporting their choices.'

Lynne Hamilton-Gow, head of marketing and student recruitment, ICAEW

'Encourage your child to try out different professions. There are lots of employers and not-for-profit organisations out there to help young people do that, for example through summer schools and work experience.'

Emily Archer, programme delivery manager, Pathways to Property – a career exploring programme for students

'Encourage your child to: take part in extracurricular activities; talk to family and friends about their careers; explore possible apprenticeship schemes and educational opportunities; attend open days and careers fairs; and turn to their school's careers adviser or library.'

Helen Alkin, head of early careers recruitment, Marks & Spencer

'Universities offer their students opportunities on top of their degree to give them a competitive advantage. When you and your child are researching universities, ask about mentoring programmes, internships, scholarships, awards and international travel opportunities.'

Lynne Russell, communications manager,
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

'I think the most important thing is to understand how your child learns best. For example, if they are an individual who learns by doing rather than being taught in a classroom environment, then an apprenticeship rather than university may well be the best option for them.'

Emma Barbour, talent acquisition partner –
early careers, UK Power Networks

'Help your child identify what their key strengths are. Work experience is a great way to do this, as well as obtaining feedback from teachers, friends etc. Finding the perfect career can be challenging, so do as much research as you can together and be supportive and realistic.'

Tor Redman, early in career resourcing lead – BDO

Career choices

– taking the first steps

Get your child on the right track by encouraging them to think about the careers they might enjoy.

Some people know from an early age that they want to be a doctor or a journalist. But what if your child isn't sure? You might find it helpful to work through the following pointers with them.

1. Explore their options

Many careers are open to young people regardless of the subjects they've studied for their A levels, Scottish Highers or undergraduate degree. This is often (but not always) the case in areas such as business, finance, law and the media. So it's fine if your child doesn't feel ready to decide yet, or wants to change path later on.

However, some careers do require a particular degree or vocational training path, and often specific subject choices for A levels/Scottish Highers too. This tends to be the case in areas such as science, medicine and engineering. So do start thinking about careers now, so they can make subject choices that leave open doors to careers that might appeal.

The TARGET careers website has a handy list of degree subjects you need for different careers (see box on facing page for details). If your child is feeling stressed about the need to drop subjects and narrow their options, encourage them to take a look. They could

work through the careers that *do* require particular subjects and decide whether they are happy to rule them out or want to keep these options open.

2. Look past the stereotypes

Encourage your child to take a quick look at as many career areas as possible, rather than instantly ruling any out on the basis of stereotypes or assumptions. Plenty of engineers wear suits and go to business meetings – and engineering employers are very keen to hire more women. Many IT professionals spend more time talking to clients about their needs than they do writing code. Lots of lawyers have jobs that don't require them to defend people accused of unpleasant crimes.

3. Beware 'safe' choices

Take care if your child is considering an option because they think it is a 'safe choice' or a 'good job', rather than out of intrinsic interest. IT and law, for example, have a 'solid' image but it may be harder than you think for your child to get their first job and not all roles will offer a high salary. Trading in an academic or vocational path your child will enjoy for assumptions about a 'guaranteed good job' is likely to lead to disappointment.

4. Find their motivation

It's important for your child to be motivated by their career choice, both in terms of working to get the grades they need and progressing their career once they start work.

Encourage them to think about what's important to them in life. Money? Helping people? Being creative? Thinking about what they value may help to guide their thinking.

Their interests can be another useful starting point. If your child is a Formula 1 fan, would they enjoy designing cars as an automotive engineer? If they like to hit the shops at the weekend, how about a career managing a store – or even a whole chain?

Also consider with your child which subjects they are good at and what other skills they have. Perhaps they are good at speaking in front of large groups of people or working out and sticking to a budget. Keep these skills in mind when reading about different jobs.

5. Do further research

Got a shortlist? Find out more with online research. Then try networking. You and your child can ask your family and friends if they have any good contacts, attend university open days and school leaver job fairs, and look for employers who are willing to offer work experience. ☺

More help from TARGETcareers

- To get lots more help with choosing a career, head to targetcareers.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-your-career.
- Read overviews of careers in 12 key areas at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors.
- You can also find out which careers need certain degrees and get more on this by visiting targetcareers.co.uk/uni/choices-about-uni.



Helping your child choose the right career for them

Sally Cleaver is group HR and diversity manager at Willmott Dixon and part of the Go Construct initiative, coordinated by the CITB.



While your child might readily talk to you about careers, don't be afraid to bring it up with them if they don't. You could ask questions such as 'Have you talked about careers at school?', 'Have you started to put your CV together?' and 'Are there any careers fairs coming up at school?'. Keep an eye on the school newsletters too; they'll often tell you what they're covering with your child and what events are coming up. Your guidance and support will be a great help, but remember not to take over or force your aspirations or ideas onto your child. It has to be what they want to do.

What your child enjoys is most important

Encourage your child to think of what they like doing and are good at. To help them match their interests with different careers, they can talk to their careers adviser at school and ask their friends, teachers and other family members what jobs they think they'd be good at. Completing a personality questionnaire such as the one on the Go Construct website will flag up the types of jobs they might be suited to. I'd also advise your child to do independent research online and go to careers fairs to explore the different stands. Parents can sometimes attend these too.

Keep an open mind

I would recommend that your child investigates *all* of their options at this stage – even careers that they might not have considered – and doesn't rule out an industry based on preconceptions or because they assume it doesn't offer the job they want. Every industry is made up of a range of job roles, many of which they may not be aware of. My daughter's school ran a 'take your daughter to work' day and she originally didn't want to come to Willmott Dixon because she thought that construction meant just being out on site, but she spent time in the legal, finance, communications, recruitment, and health and safety departments and had a great experience.

Talking to somebody who does the job your child is interested in and getting some work experience with a company are great ways for them to find out more about a career. See page 22 for more advice.

Don't stress too much about it

Finally, while it's important to start thinking about careers, don't put too much pressure on them. I suspect that there will be lots of changes in thoughts and aspirations over the next ten years and that's okay. Whatever your child decides aged 16, it's not going to prevent a career change in the future if they want to. ©

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Navigating the world of apprenticeships

Work-based routes for 18-year-olds include higher and degree apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and sponsored degrees.

Apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and sponsored degrees usually involve working for an employer and studying for relevant qualifications, although exactly how your child's time is split between the two will depend on the scheme and the employer. You can find out more about the different options available to your child in this article.

Bear in mind, though, that different organisations refer to their opportunities in slightly different ways, so it's important to

look beyond the name of the opportunity and find out the specifics of what the employer is offering, such as qualifications and pay.

What are the different apprenticeships on offer?

There is an official national framework for apprenticeship that sets out four types of apprenticeship, each offering qualifications at different levels:

- Intermediate (level two) is equivalent to GCSEs

- Advanced (level three) is equal to A levels
- Higher (levels four and five) leads to a qualification that is equivalent to a higher education certificate, higher education diploma or a foundation degree
- Degree (levels six and seven) results in a bachelors or masters degree.

This framework is set and regulated by the government – an opportunity must meet specific criteria to be able to call itself an apprenticeship.

Higher and degree apprenticeships are typically open to applicants with A levels or equivalent qualifications (such as Scottish Highers, an advanced apprenticeship or an NVQ level 3).

An apprentice will typically attend college or university either one day a week (day release) or for a week or more at a time (block release). The cost of an apprenticeship – and any tuition fees – will be entirely covered by the employer and the government.

Employers don't tend to guarantee that there will be a job at the end of it but in practice they are typically keen to keep employees on. Scheme lengths vary; the higher the qualification involved, the longer the scheme will be. Higher and degree apprenticeships typically last between three and five years.

What is a sponsored degree?

There are two types of sponsored degrees. The first operates in a similar way to higher apprenticeships and school leaver programmes: your child will work for their employer, earn a wage, study for a degree part time (either by attending a local university or through distance learning) and have their tuition fees paid for them. Their degree is typically chosen by the employer – and it may even play a part in designing the course content.

The second type is where an employer offers partial financial support to students who are attending university full time in the traditional way and are studying a subject that relates to the employer's business. Typically, the student will complete paid work with the employer during university vacations. They may also be required to work for the sponsor for a minimum period after graduation. This form of sponsored degree is most frequently provided by engineering companies (find out more about how to get into engineering on page 42).

What is a school leaver programme?

School leaver programmes are normally aimed at those with A levels (or equivalent). Unlike an apprenticeship, a school leaver programme doesn't need to fit a set framework, so the term can be used to describe a broad range of programmes that combine earning and learning, with tuition fees covered by the employer. However, some employers may call their scheme a school leaver programme when it is technically an apprenticeship.

School leaver programmes are quite often available with employers in accountancy and related areas. This typically involves studying for professional qualifications that are designed to qualify them as chartered accountants, such as the ICAEW Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business (ICAEW CFAB) and the ACA. Participants tend to end up with the same professional qualifications that graduates joining the organisation would work towards – and in some cases they achieve this at a younger age. Programmes tend to last around five years. You can find out more about how to get into finance on page 36. ©




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Which route is best financially?

A school leaver programme will allow your child to earn while learning, but can they earn as much as a graduate in the long term?

There's no 'one size fits all' answer to the question of whether school leavers will be better off financially if they go to university full time or join an employer at 18 on a higher apprenticeship or other school leaver programme. It depends on the career they want to get into and the particular school leaver programme they are considering.

Comparing paths

Some school leaver opportunities are designed to get participants to the same level in their careers as graduates who go to university full time before joining. This is often the case with employers who offer the chance to do a degree part time while working. Examples in finance include Barclays' higher apprenticeship in leadership and management and PwC's Flying Start degree programmes. Examples in IT include CGI's and IBM's degree apprenticeships.

However, not all school leaver programmes are designed to put them on a par with graduates. In these cases they might find that in the long term they will earn less than those with a degree. Make sure your child's research includes finding out about the qualifications they need to progress long term. For example, in engineering, if they eventually want to become a chartered

engineer (the highest level), it's easiest if they have a masters degree. (See page 42 for more on getting into engineering.)

Earnings v. debt

If your child goes to university, they are likely to leave with student debt, which will then accrue interest. Student Finance, which is linked to the government, offers two types of student loan: one to cover tuition fees and a maintenance loan to help pay for living costs. The total amount they repay will depend on how quickly they pay it off and whether they have paid off all their debt 30 years after they graduate (at which point any remaining debt is written off).

Repayment will be deducted from your child's monthly wage once they're earning over a certain amount: £21,000 (likely to rise to £25,000) or more in England and Wales and £17,775 or more in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Would they have been better or worse off financially if they hadn't taken on this debt to get a degree? If they'd managed to get a place on a school leaver programme that got them to the same earning level as graduates in the same length of time – and that was as good for their career in the long term – then they'd have been better off without it. However, if they ended up earning a little less than a graduate then they might not have been.



WORK OR UNIVERSITY?



See our advice on 'University fees and funding' at targetcareers.co.uk (click on 'Uni' then 'Choices about uni').

Ignore 'average' salaries

It's wise not to get too fixated on statistics relating to average salaries for all graduates or school leavers. Media reports about how much graduates earn often don't give the full story about their figures (see page 32 for more information). And salaries vary so much, particularly for graduates, that averages aren't much help in predicting what your child personally might earn.

Take a look instead at our 'How much will I earn?' articles for the career sectors of interest on targetcareers.co.uk, which will give you a feel for graduate and school leaver programme salaries in different industries.

Also, remember that school leavers start working at a younger age and will probably have had several pay rises by the time graduates of the same age join the company. ©

'I enjoy being an ICAEW Apprentice as I am able to progress quickly and gain valuable career experience.'

Martha Jary, ACA student, BDO

For details on the ACA qualification from ICAEW, visit icaew.com/parents





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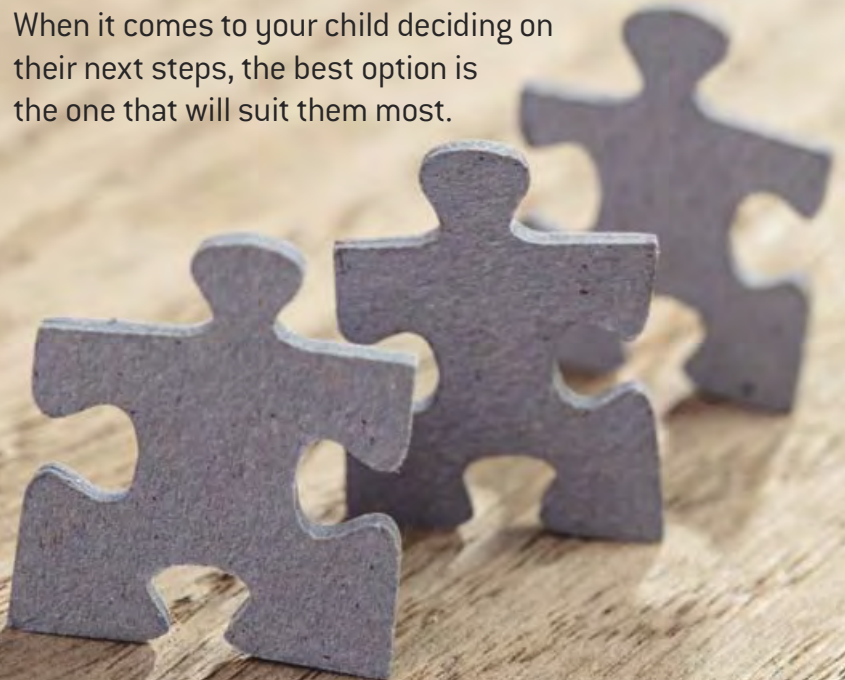
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Is work or university the best fit for my child?

When it comes to your child deciding on their next steps, the best option is the one that will suit them most.





What is life on a school leaver programme like, and how does it compare to going to university full-time? It's important for you and your child to get a sense of what to expect from the different experiences on offer, so that your child can make the best choice for them.

Independent living

If your child decides to go to university in the traditional sense, they are likely to share a house or flat with other students and take responsibility for tasks such as buying and cooking their own food, washing clothes and paying bills. This introduces them to living independently, while allowing them to share the experience with others in the same position. However, moving away is not essential if your child attends a university close enough to home to commute on a daily basis.

A school leaver programme might be too far away for your child to commute, requiring them to leave home. Even if it isn't, there's still the option for your child to move out if they want to, as they will probably be earning enough to pay rent. They might be able to share accommodation with other apprentices, but there's no guarantee that they'll be living with people their own age. Are they ready for that level of independence? Some programmes include placements based in different locations or short overnight trips to other areas of the country – would your child enjoy these opportunities to move around frequently?

Academic freedom or practical results?

Most degrees give your child the freedom to choose which topics they study, especially in their final year. Many courses also include a project or dissertation, allowing them to focus on the aspects that they are most passionate about. The main outcome of a piece of work (eg an essay) will be a grade. Will this be sufficient reward, or would your child prefer to see their work having a positive impact on other people or on a business? Vocational courses, which may include laboratory sessions or work placements, provide more opportunities for students to apply what they've learned to real-world situations, but even these aim to develop a student's understanding of a subject from an academic or theoretical perspective.

On a school leaver programme, as with any job, your child's day-to-day work will have a clear purpose that helps their employer work towards its business goals. They may see their work have an impact on clients, and possibly even on profits. However, if your child's school leaver programme includes a degree, the topics they study will be chosen by their employer and relate to their working life. Would your child enjoy being able to apply what they're learning to their job, or would they prefer the freedom to study what they like?

Flexibility or structure?

Universities typically expect students to spend around 35 to 45 hours a week studying. Science subjects tend to have around 20 contact hours a week, and arts >>

subjects even fewer, meaning that most of your child's time will be spent in private study. It's up to your child how much time they commit, as there is less direct supervision than at school. Would your child be motivated to crack on by themselves? Equally, your child might value having control over their schedule and the flexibility to pop round to friends' rooms for a cuppa or stay up late without an early start for work the next day.

School leaver programmes tend to have more of a nine-to-five structure. Your child may benefit from this as their time is usually all theirs once each shift is finished, and it offers a clear distinction between work, study and other areas of their life. School leavers on schemes such as higher apprenticeships spend the majority of their time at work. If the programme involves working towards a degree or professional qualification, they will attend sessions at college or university during work hours but may also need to study at home in their own time – especially close to exams.

Opportunities to socialise and try new things

As a full-time student your child would mix largely with people of their own age. There would be opportunities to mix with people they live with, people on the same course and those they meet through extracurricular activities. Universities have lots of opportunities to get involved in sport, theatre, politics, fundraising and media. Societies allow your child to meet people with common interests or try something completely new. However, at busy times of the year your child may need to turn down social invitations so they can study.

On a school leaver programme they would have colleagues of all ages. There would still be the chance to meet others of the same age, though – both at work and while studying for qualifications. If your child prefers working in a group, they might be happier working alongside colleagues than at university where interaction can be limited by the need to study independently. On a school leaver programme your child might not have much free time during the week, but will usually have weekends free to catch up with friends or pursue hobbies. If they do need to work at weekends, they will get time off during the week instead. Some employers run clubs and activities, or alternatively your child might be able to find a club in the local area that interests them.

Work experience and keeping options open

Going to university in the traditional way allows your child to explore career options before making a decision. Students can get work experience during vacations, fit part-time jobs or volunteering around their studies, try career-related activities on campus and make use of the careers service. Some courses incorporate a year in industry, while others (such as nursing) include work placements that students attend on certain days each week. As a lot of graduate jobs don't require students to have studied a particular subject, your child won't be limited to one career after graduating. However, some jobs do require a specific degree. Your child should look into this if they have a strong interest in a particular career.

School leaver programmes provide excellent work experience in their particular field. Many will train your child for a specific

job, but some will give them the chance to experience different areas of the business. If your child doesn't know what career they want, or has several different ideas, then a school leaver programme is probably not for them. If the programme includes a degree, then this will be transferable to other careers – however, your child may be asked to explain why they chose to train in one career and apply for jobs in another. Qualifications below degree level are less likely to help if your child

wants to change career completely. It's also worth checking whether your child is expected to work for the company for a set period of time after finishing the programme. ☺

More help from TARGETcareers

- See targetcareers.co.uk for which careers do and don't require a specific degree. Look under 'Uni' then 'Choices about uni'.
- For more information on whether university or a school leaver programme would suit your child best, go to 'Careers advice' then 'Work v. uni'.

One size doesn't fit all.



Testing the waters – how your child can gain experience

Encourage your child to dip their feet into the professional world and find out more about different careers before diving in head first.



Work experience will help your child find out about the different careers that interest them and what they do and don't enjoy. It will

also help them to:

- develop the skills that employers and universities value, such as communication, teamwork and time management
- experience what working life is like
- increase their confidence, independence and professionalism
- enhance their employability and boost their CV, university personal statement and job applications
- meet people who could help them in their future career – and they may find a potential future employer. @

Formal work experience opportunities

- **Work experience placements.** Often lasting up to a week at a company, arranged by your child's school/college or independently. Many large employers, including EY, Sky, HSBC, Rolls-Royce and Boots, advertise opportunities on their websites and targetcareers.co.uk. Your child (under your supervision) can also approach smaller, local businesses over the phone or by email to say they'd be interested in a few days' work experience, check if this is possible and ask about the preferred way of applying. You should follow your child's school/college's safeguarding guidelines – they will also have a list of approved employers.
- **Work shadowing.** Your child will observe one person to gain insight into their job. Usually just for a day, these opportunities aren't advertised, so professionals will need to be approached directly. If any of your family, friends or

neighbours work in an area your child is interested in, you could ask if they'd be willing to help.

- **Employers' insight days or weeks for school leavers.** Some employers offer students the chance to spend a day or more seeing for themselves what working there would be like. They may also get some handy tips on the application for its school leaver programme. You can look for upcoming events on targetcareers.co.uk and employers' careers websites.
- **School leaver careers fairs and employer events.** Careers fairs allow students to meet lots of employers in one go and ask questions. An event run by one employer will give your child a deeper insight into that organisation, for example via an open evening at its offices.

Other activities

Beyond formal work experience, there are lots of options that can help your child develop useful skills and get a feel for what they enjoy. They may even be taking part in some of these activities already.

- **Volunteering and fundraising.** Your child could volunteer at a charity shop, help with outdoor conservation projects, become a volunteer police cadet or take part in the National Citizen Service. Find out more about opportunities for young people at #iwill and vlnspired.
- **Extracurricular activities.** These include: being part of a sports team or other club; taking part in a theatre production; writing for a student newspaper; joining the school debating society; being a Scout or Guide; and completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- **Competitions.** Encourage your child to research whether there are competitions in areas that interest them, for example design, writing, photography, maths, engineering or business.
- **Part-time jobs.** Your child could try their hand at babysitting or a paper round, get a part-time job in a supermarket or café at the weekend or look for a temporary job in the holidays. Attractions such as zoos and garden centres often hire more staff for the summer.
- **Personal projects.** If your child has designed and made something themselves, such as a DIY project, website or blog, they may well have developed the problem-solving and creative skills that employers look for. Another option is learning a language independently.
- **Positions of responsibility.** These could include being a head boy or head girl, sports captain, house captain, school council member, peer mentor or having a leadership or committee role in a club.
- **Summer school.** Several universities run these, usually for up to a week. It can help your child build their knowledge of a subject and decide whether they'd enjoy studying it full time – and whether they'd enjoy university life. Summer schools are quite common for science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. You can find out more on universities' websites and at The Sutton Trust, Pathways to Property and Headstart.



Parental advice

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Researching employers' programmes – dig out the facts

Find out everything you need to know about school leaver programmes by visiting careers fairs and looking online.

If your child is thinking of joining an employer to 'earn and learn', you'll want to research the schemes they are considering. Make sure before you start that your child knows what career they want, so they can assess whether the programmes available are appropriate routes.

Sources of information

You can find basic details of programmes online, for example on targetcareers.co.uk and employers' own websites. Also ask your friends and family if anyone has a contact at the company in question with whom you could have an informal chat.

Some employers attend careers fairs or hold open days. Here you can speak to recruiters and, often, young employees on the relevant programme. Parents are usually welcome, but remember to take a backseat and let your child do the talking. There's advice on how to make the most of such events at targetcareers.co.uk (click on 'Careers advice' then 'Building networks'). You can find details of open days on the careers pages of employers' websites and the box opposite lists some fairs.

Qualifications offered

Find out what qualifications your child would gain. Use targetcareers.co.uk to assess whether these would get your child into the right career

at the right level – go to 'Career sectors', then choose the relevant area.

There is a national framework for apprenticeships that defines the level of qualifications on offer (see page 12). However, there is no such framework for other school leaver programmes. Some employers offer school leavers the chance to study for professional qualifications that are also taken by their graduate recruits, such as the ACA qualification from ICAEW. Professional qualifications certify that you have the training and skills needed to do your job to a high standard; in some industries such as accounting they are essential to progress your career. Check the detail of what is on offer carefully.

If a degree is mentioned, double check whether it is a full bachelors degree (if this is important to you or your child). Sometimes a foundation degree is included instead, which is the equivalent of two thirds of a standard university degree.

As good as a graduate?

It's worth asking how, once your child has finished the programme, their career prospects would compare with those of a graduate recruit. Would they be doing the same kind of work? How would their salary compare with that of a graduate of the same age? Would your child's prospects for career



progression and promotion be the same as a graduate's? You're unlikely to find this information online, so ask in person at careers fairs or open days.

Support available

Investigate what support would be available. Is there a buddy system or mentoring scheme? Would there be help with finding accommodation or with the cost of relocation? Does the employer have groups or activities that could help your child to make friends, such as clubs, regular social events, an LGBT group or a women's network?

Travel required

Depending on their role, your child may be expected to travel frequently. For example, they might visit different offices or clients while maintaining a regular base, or move round different parts of the country to complete the programme. Make sure your child is happy with the amount of travel involved and the logistics of combining this with time at college or university. Check also whether the costs of travel are met by the employer. Again, this is information that you're likely to have to gather in person.

About the contract

Typically recruiters do not guarantee that employees will be kept on at the end of the programme; however, in practice they usually want to keep them. Be aware of whether your child would be offered a permanent or fixed-term contract initially but don't reject opportunities on this basis.

Do take note of whether there is a 'tie-in' period after training has ended. You may also want to investigate what would happen if your child were to drop out of the scheme part-way through (for example whether they would have to repay any training costs), though it might be safest to leave this until your child has a job offer. ©

Careers fairs

There are lots of careers fairs held around the country. The following will help you get started.

- www.theskillsshow.com
- www.nationalapprenticeshipshow.org
- www.regionalskillsevents.co.uk

Researching degree courses – leave no stone unturned

Research courses thoroughly with your child and you'll both be confident that they've picked the best ones for them.

Once your child knows what degree subject they would like to study, it's worth drawing up a shortlist of universities that they are interested in. You can then do some further research with your child to narrow this list down. They can apply to a maximum of five universities via UCAS. The same degree can differ between universities, so look into each course in as much detail as possible. Here are some factors for you to consider.

Researching courses

- What content is covered? Does this match their interests?
- Do the lecturers' backgrounds and research areas tie in with the topics your child wants to learn about?
- How many hours of contact time are there each week and how is this divided up (eg into lectures, tutorials and/or lab sessions)?
- How many hours of study are students recommended to do by themselves each week? If your child is planning to work part time, could they fit this in?
- Are students assessed by coursework, exams or both, and what proportion of their final grade does each element count for?
- What are the student satisfaction ratings for the course?
- What jobs have past students gone on to do?
- How much are the tuition fees and are there any extra costs?

- What are the relevant department's ratings for research and teaching quality?
- Is the course taught at one of the university's main locations or further afield?

Questions about vocational degrees

- Is the course accredited by a relevant professional body?
- Which employers do past students now work for?
- What percentage of graduates find work in the relevant industry?
- What links does the course have to employers? Are there opportunities to meet them, get sponsored by them or do work placements with them?
- What modules are included? Do these relate to your child's career interests?
- Have any of the lecturers worked in the relevant industry?

You might not be able to find all of this information on the university's website. If you can't, you or your child could contact the relevant course admissions tutor or ask in person at an open day (see below).

Researching universities

- How highly ranked is the university overall?
- How employable are its students? What facilities and initiatives does it have to help them become more employable?
- Where is it located? How much would it cost to live there and would the university provide accommodation?

- How long would it take your child to get home for a visit, or to commute if they plan to live at home?
- Does the university have clubs and societies that relate to their outside interests – or could they find these elsewhere locally?
- Does the local area have the facilities they want?

Visiting universities

Encourage your child to visit universities and departments to meet or listen to the academics who would be teaching them – parents can usually attend too, but encourage your child to speak for themselves. Are they welcoming? Do they sound passionate about their subject? Open days and taster courses are a good chance to do this. You can find out more about taster courses on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com).

Have a good wander round to see the facilities – labs, lecture halls, libraries etc – and what the atmosphere is like. Head further afield to explore the local area. Would your child feel at home?

Impressing graduate recruiters

Knowing what employers like in their graduate recruits could also help your child's decision.

- Some recruiters prefer prestigious universities. So investigate higher-ranked institutions if your child is predicted good grades, but find one where they will feel inspired and supported.
- Almost all recruiters want graduates to have taken part in activities outside of their degree. So consider whether a university has clubs or volunteering programmes that your child would like to join. If they plan to live at home they might be best at a university that doesn't require a long daily commute so they have time for other interests. ☺

More help from TARGETcareers

Go to targetcareers.co.uk/uni where you'll find:

- a university course search
- university profiles
- city guides
- help on applying to university via UCAS
- degree subject guides
- university reviews – find out what current students think about their universities.



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Degrees and employment prospects: top five myths

Make sure your child isn't misled if they are choosing a degree course with their employment prospects in mind.

Don't believe everything you hear about degrees and employment prospects. We've put together our top five myths to guide you through the maze.

MYTH ONE: arts degrees won't get you a job

Truth: An arts degree is a good start to a broad range of careers. Some graduate jobs require a particular subject or range of subjects (eg a numerate degree or a science degree) but many roles are open to graduates of any subject. There are also conversion courses for graduates who want to change direction after their degree.

Many employers ask for at least a 2.1 (the second highest degree grade). So if your child wants to join, say, a big accountancy firm after they graduate – a route that is open to graduates of all subjects but typically requires a 2.1 – they would be far better off with a 2.1 in English than a 2.2 in maths or economics.

MYTH TWO: a sensible subject is better than one you will enjoy

Truth: As per myth one, academic success is a big factor in employability. Getting good grades requires motivation, and it's far easier to stay motivated about something that interests you. >>

This is particularly important at university. In many cases attending lectures is optional; lecturers are unlikely to hound slacking students and there are hundreds of fun distractions. On some degrees students are expected to spend the vast majority of their time studying alone – and no one will check up on this. If your child chooses a subject they enjoy, they will be less likely to neglect their studies.

MYTH THREE: vocational degrees are great for job prospects

Truth: There's sometimes a mismatch in expectations as to what a vocational degree will provide. Students can assume that it will focus on the skills employers seek; their lecturers may view it as an academic background to an area. Research courses carefully.

Employers typically favour graduates who have experience outside of their degree, gained through work experience or extracurricular activities, even if their course was vocational. A media recruiter, for example, is likely to be far more impressed by a history graduate who edited a section of a student magazine and has taken work placements with local newspapers than a journalism graduate who hasn't.

Different industries' recruitment needs vary according to the state of the economy. Some are very cyclical; construction in particular was badly hit after the credit crunch. Outsourcing can take jobs abroad, while recruitment caps can be brought in in public sector roles. An area that's booming when a student applies for their degree might not be once they finish their studies.

MYTH FOUR: studying IT makes you very employable

Truth: Each year the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey reports what

graduates are doing six months after finishing their degrees. The subject with consistently the highest unemployment rate for those with an undergraduate degree is computer science (the unemployment rate was 9.3% in the 2017/18 survey). That's not to say that there aren't plenty of jobs available for IT graduates with good grades and extracurricular experience – just that even such a useful-sounding subject won't guarantee you a job.

MYTH FIVE: graduates start on £28,000 to £30,000

Truth: The press love to report on surveys that suggest high graduate starting salaries. Regularly quoted reports include The Graduate Market (from High Fliers) and the biannual surveys from the Institute of Student Employers (ISE). The former predicted an average graduate starting salary of £30,000 for 2017, while the ISE Annual Survey, published in September 2017, reported an average of £28,000.

However, they are based largely on salaries from the biggest, highest-paying employers, not from all organisations offering graduate jobs. For example, the 200 ISE members who responded to the ISE survey offered 31,630 graduate jobs in 2017, while around 300,000 graduates leave university each year, meaning that only around ten per cent of graduates will land one of these roles.

A more accurate salary picture comes from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey, which is based on universities contacting all of their graduates. This found that graduates who left university in 2016 with an undergraduate degree and were in full-time jobs six months later earned an average of £21,176. ©

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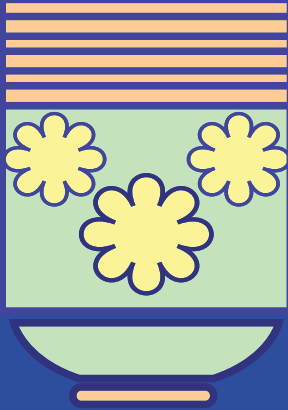
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How to get into finance

Find out about routes into accountancy and banking careers.

There are two routes into most finance careers. Your child could go to university full time first and then apply for a graduate job, or join an employer after their A levels or equivalent and start earning while they learn. Here we concentrate on accountancy and banking careers but you'll find an extended version at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors that includes investment management, insurance and actuarial work.

Accountancy

There are both graduate and school leaver programmes available with many accountancy firms. Whichever route your child chooses, once they've started their job they'll work towards becoming professionally qualified as a chartered accountant. You can read more about this at targetcareers.co.uk.

Starting work at 18

Accountancy firms usually seek good academic grades (eg 112 UCAS points*) from applicants, with at least a C grade in GCSE maths and English. Most school leaver programmes last five years; the first two years are spent working towards a basic qualification or certificate, the following three towards a professional qualification. A few firms offer a combined degree and professional qualification programme – these programmes usually take between four and six years.

A small number of firms offer summer schools for year 12 students – this kind of experience will make your child more employable, as will attending a firm's school events, open evenings or insight days.

Accountancy careers for graduates

As a general rule, graduates will need a 2.1 degree (the second highest grade) in almost any subject to enter the accountancy profession. However, some accountancy firms, including EY and Deloitte, will accept candidates with a 2.2 degree (the third highest grade). Arts degrees are as welcome as numerate degrees (degrees with a high concentration of maths), though there's often a numeracy test as part of the application process. Graduates also need to have developed skills such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving, for example through extracurricular activities or part-time jobs.

Most employers want good A level grades (eg 112 UCAS points*), although things are changing. Work experience can help too. Lots



of accountancy firms offer internships, which can lead to a job offer after graduation. Doing an internship isn't essential though; other work experience, such as bar work or volunteering, is equally valuable. After being hired, graduates usually take about three years to become professionally qualified.

Banking

The entry requirements for careers in banking depend on the division of a bank that your child applies to and whether they want to go in as a school/college leaver or a graduate.

Starting work at 18

Banks' retail and corporate divisions hire college leavers into higher apprenticeships (sometimes known as level 4 apprenticeships). Recruiters typically ask for at least two good A levels (A to C) or between 80 and 112 UCAS points*, as well as five or more A to C grade GCSEs, including maths and English. Recruiters may also seek customer service experience.

Some retail banks will start their school leavers off in a frontline role. Barclays' higher

apprentices, for example, spend the first year at a local branch or within its call centre. Other banks put school leavers into their intended roles straight away.

Banking careers for graduates

For graduate programmes within retail and corporate banking, applicants typically need a 2.1 in any subject and 120 to 152 UCAS points*. Most employers also have minimum GCSE (or equivalent) requirements; for example HSBC asks for a grade C or above in English and maths. Conversely, building society Nationwide accepts applications from graduates with a 2.2 (the third highest grade), but conditions apply.

To get into investment banking, applicants typically need a university degree at a 2.1 or above and at least 120 UCAS points*. Most investment banks take on graduates from all academic disciplines into finance roles. High achievers in any subjects who have studied at top ranking universities tend to have the best chances. A relevant internship is almost a must. ☺

* This is based on the new UCAS points system from September 2017.



More help from TARGETcareers

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/finance for the following:

- an overview of types of jobs and employers in finance
- information on professional qualifications in accountancy
- advice on choosing a university and a degree if you want a finance career
- salary details
- details of careers in investment management, insurance and actuarial work.



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How to get into business

Investigate routes into HR, sales, marketing, PR or consulting.

The term ‘business’ is very broad, so here we’re focusing on HR, sales, marketing, PR and management consulting. It’s possible to get into these careers without taking a traditional degree, for example via a higher or degree apprenticeship or sponsored degree (see page 12). Employers generally ask for two or three A levels (or equivalent). Some set minimum grades or UCAS points, typically between 80 and 120*. Some programmes offer the chance to try different business areas via a series of placements: marketing, HR and sales are common options, though PR and management consulting placements are rare. For most other opportunities, and for most graduate schemes, applicants need to know which specific area interests them.

HR

Sponsored degrees or higher apprenticeships are an option. Alternatively, some entry-level

jobs are open to non-graduates, though office administration experience is often needed first.

A number of HR graduate schemes are open to those with any degree subject, though others ask for a relevant degree (eg business studies). In many cases applicants need a 2.1 (the second highest grade) though some employers accept a 2.2 (the third highest grade). Some organisations don’t run formal graduate schemes but do have entry-level HR jobs that graduates can apply for.

Sales

A number of higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships offer the opportunity to work in a sales role. There are also entry-level and trainee roles available, for example in media sales or recruitment. To get a job it will help if your child has customer service experience or can show that they have developed relevant skills (eg building relationships and understanding other



people's needs) through extracurricular activities. Areas such as pharmaceutical or IT sales sometimes require a degree.

A number of graduate programmes are open to graduates from any degree discipline. IT companies may specify or prefer graduates with a degree in business or IT, and pharmaceutical companies often need graduates from a natural sciences, biomed, chemistry or life sciences background.

Marketing

Training programmes such as sponsored degrees, degree apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships are available. You can also get an entry-level marketing job without a degree. To get hired for the latter, your child is likely to need experience in a business setting (eg an admin job) and potentially a qualification from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). The CIM offers introductory courses and it's possible to study online and/or at evenings or weekends. Entry-level jobs in market research tend to be aimed at graduates, though your child could start in a support role and work their way up.

Some graduate roles are open to those with any degree subject; others require a relevant subject such as marketing or business studies. If your child studies a subject that isn't related to business they should try to gain some relevant experience while at university.

PR

A number of PR employers offer higher apprenticeships. To get onto one, your child will need evidence of their interest in the profession. For example, they could show their interest in current affairs by writing a blog, or that they are confident using social media by posting videos on a YouTube channel.

For graduate roles, some employers ask for a degree in a relevant subject, and/or a 2.1

degree; others don't. If your child's degree relates to the work that an employer does, that could give them an advantage: a science graduate may appeal to a PR organisation that specialises in healthcare communications, for example.

Management consulting

Some firms, often referred to as professional services firms, offer a range of services to clients, such as accountancy, tax and consulting; others are purely consulting firms. At the time of writing, none of the latter offer opportunities for school leavers. However, professional services firms PwC and Deloitte offer school leaver programmes in consulting while KPMG includes an opportunity to experience consulting in its school leaver option called 360°, which gives a taste of several different divisions.


Graduates from any degree discipline can become consultants. A 2.1 is the minimum grade usually required by employers. Intellectual ability is highly prized, so your child should study a subject they can get top grades in at the most prestigious university they can get into. ☺

* This is based on the new UCAS points system from September 2017.

More help from TARGETcareers

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/business to find:

- an extended version of this article
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How to get into engineering

Explore paths into engineering and the grades required.



Would-be engineers who intend to complete their A levels, BTEC or Scottish Highers can either study for an engineering degree before starting work or join a higher apprenticeship programme with an engineering employer.

A level subjects

If your child wants to take a degree in engineering they need an A level (or equivalent) in maths. In many cases they will also need physics. Some chemical engineering degrees ask for maths and chemistry instead; some ask for all three. For some very prestigious universities it is helpful also to have further maths. See the extended version of this article at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/engineering for more details.

To get onto an engineering higher apprenticeship or similar your child will typically need maths and science A levels. Some employers specify which science subjects they want.

Grades required

If your child wants to get into a top university to study engineering they will typically need A* and A grades in their A levels or equivalent. Universities that aren't as highly ranked often ask for As and Bs. Entry requirements for higher apprenticeships and sponsored degrees are typically a bit lower. Some employers don't specify grades; some ask for C grades or above at A level or equivalent; and others set a minimum number of UCAS points, typically between 96 (CCC) and 120 (BBB)* though sometimes higher.

The university route

Your child could study a particular area of engineering, such as mechanical engineering or civil engineering, or keep their options open with a general engineering degree. They can also choose between a course that leads to a bachelors-level qualification (BEng) or one that leads to a masters-level qualification (MEng).

Many engineering employers run graduate schemes for those who have completed an

engineering degree. As well as a job to do, graduates are likely to receive formal training and might have the chance to try out different roles to see which suits them best. There are also many jobs for graduate engineers with companies that don't run formal graduate schemes. Often these are with smaller organisations that need someone to come in and do a particular job straight away.

Joining an employer at 18

A number of engineering employers run higher apprenticeships, which are aimed at those who've just finished their A levels (or equivalent). The qualifications your child would gain vary from company to company – some offer the chance to gain a bachelors degree; others offer a foundation degree or an HND or an HNC, for example.

All programmes involve combining a job with part-time study. Your child might work Monday to Thursday and then spend Friday studying at a local college or university, or attend college in blocks of a week or more at a time. They'll also need to spend some of their spare time studying at home. However, their employer will typically pay all of their tuition fees.

Your child is unlikely to be guaranteed when they start the programme that they will have a permanent job once they finish. However, if they do well their employer is very likely to offer them a position. It may also support them to continue their studies to a higher level.

Several engineering employers also offer sponsored degrees. Find out more about sponsored degrees on page 13.

Becoming professionally qualified

Many engineers choose to become professionally registered. This means that a professional body has certified that they have the right level of skills and knowledge to meet its benchmark. Engineers work towards

becoming professionally registered over a period of time while in employment, gathering evidence of their skills and experience before being assessed.

There are different levels of professional registration. The highest is chartered engineer, then incorporated engineer, then engineering technician. On average, chartered engineers earn more than incorporated engineers, and incorporated engineers earn more than engineering technicians.

The quickest and simplest route to chartered engineer status is with a masters degree; the quickest and simplest route to incorporated engineer level is with at least a bachelors degree. However, it's also possible to get there with lower qualifications, if you can prove that you've reached these levels of learning in another way. ☺

* This is based on the new UCAS points system from September 2017.



More help from TARGETcareers

Pick up a copy of TARGETcareers *Construction, Engineering & Property*.

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/engineering for more on engineering careers, including:

- an overview of types of jobs and employers in engineering
- advice on choosing an engineering degree or higher apprenticeship
- engineering salaries
- advice on engineering degree sponsorship.

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How to get into IT

Discover ways your child could start a career in technology.

There are IT jobs available at many different levels. If your child is doing well academically it makes sense for them to start a little way up the ladder, either by going to university and then getting a graduate-level job, or by starting work after their A levels or Scottish Highers with an employer who will train them – for example via a higher apprenticeship or a degree apprenticeship.

Uni first, job later

It's possible to get into an IT career as a graduate with any subject. However, broadly speaking, the less technical your child's degree

the fewer roles will be open to them; as such they'll face more competition and need to be more impressive as a candidate. Bear in mind:

- Some technology employers require a particular, IT-related degree, eg computer science or software engineering. This is particularly the case with smaller employers, who are less able to take graduates who need lots of training.
- Some technology employers accept subjects such as engineering, science or maths for IT jobs but won't accept arts or humanities.
- Several technology employers accept graduates with any degree and train them up. In many cases this will be for slightly >>



less technical roles. To beat the competition for these jobs, a strong academic record and extracurricular achievements will help.

There is a wide range of IT degrees available. Your child could choose a broad, technically focused subject such as computer science, a more commercially focused degree such as business IT or something a bit more specialist such as computer games design, network engineering, digital media or animation. See targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors for our advice on degree choices for IT careers.

A level maths is typically needed to get onto a degree in computer science or similar at a leading university, often at A or A* grade. Less prestigious universities don't always ask for A level maths.

Starting work at 18

Degree apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships will allow your child to start work in IT after their A levels or Scottish Highers (or equivalent) and study towards higher level qualifications at the same time. See page 12 for more detail on how such programmes work. Lower levels of apprenticeship are also available.

A degree apprenticeship will enable your child to complete an IT degree part time while working for an employer. Participants earn a wage and have their studies paid for, meaning that they can graduate debt-free and with several years of valuable professional experience on their CV. Employers that offer IT degree apprenticeships include BT, CGI, Capgemini and Lloyds Banking Group.

Higher apprenticeships often include a foundation degree – the same level of qualification as an HND, and equivalent to

the first two years of a bachelors degree. Take a look at employers such as BT, National Grid, Sainsbury's and BAE Systems.

To get onto a programme that includes a degree or foundation degree your child will typically need three A levels (or equivalent). UCAS points requirements tend to vary between 98 (CCC) and 120 (BBB)*. Sometimes their A levels need to include at least one or two science, maths or technology subjects.

There are also numerous higher apprenticeships in IT that don't include university study. Entry requirements for these vary widely. Some employers ask for three A levels; others are happy with two. Some expect science, maths or technology subjects; others will accept any subject. And some specify minimum grades they will accept (typically Cs) while others don't. ©

* This is based on the new UCAS points system from September 2017.

More help from TARGETcareers

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/it-and-technology to find out more about careers in IT, including:

- an overview of the types of jobs and employers in IT
- typical salaries
- advice on choosing an IT degree
- types of tests used to assess candidates for IT higher apprenticeships and sponsored degrees.

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Getting a head start

Jade is currently on EY's business apprenticeship programme. She is an audit associate in financial services assurance.



I knew I wanted to work in finance and I thought I'd have to go to university, but after doing more research I found out about the different options. It made sense to start work straight away, avoid university debt and get extra years of experience. I'm now in my second year of the five-year business apprenticeship programme at EY, working towards completing the ACA qualification and becoming an ICAEW chartered accountant.

Going places

In assurance, I work with clients to confirm that all of the balances in their financial statements are not materially misstated, whether this be through error or fraud. I'm based in Canary Wharf and spend about 50 per cent of my time there and about 40 per cent on clients' sites conducting audits. My main clients are in Windsor, which I commute to, and in Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent, which typically involve a week away staying in a hotel. I spend around ten per cent of my time in training, either in college in London or on courses in different parts of the UK.

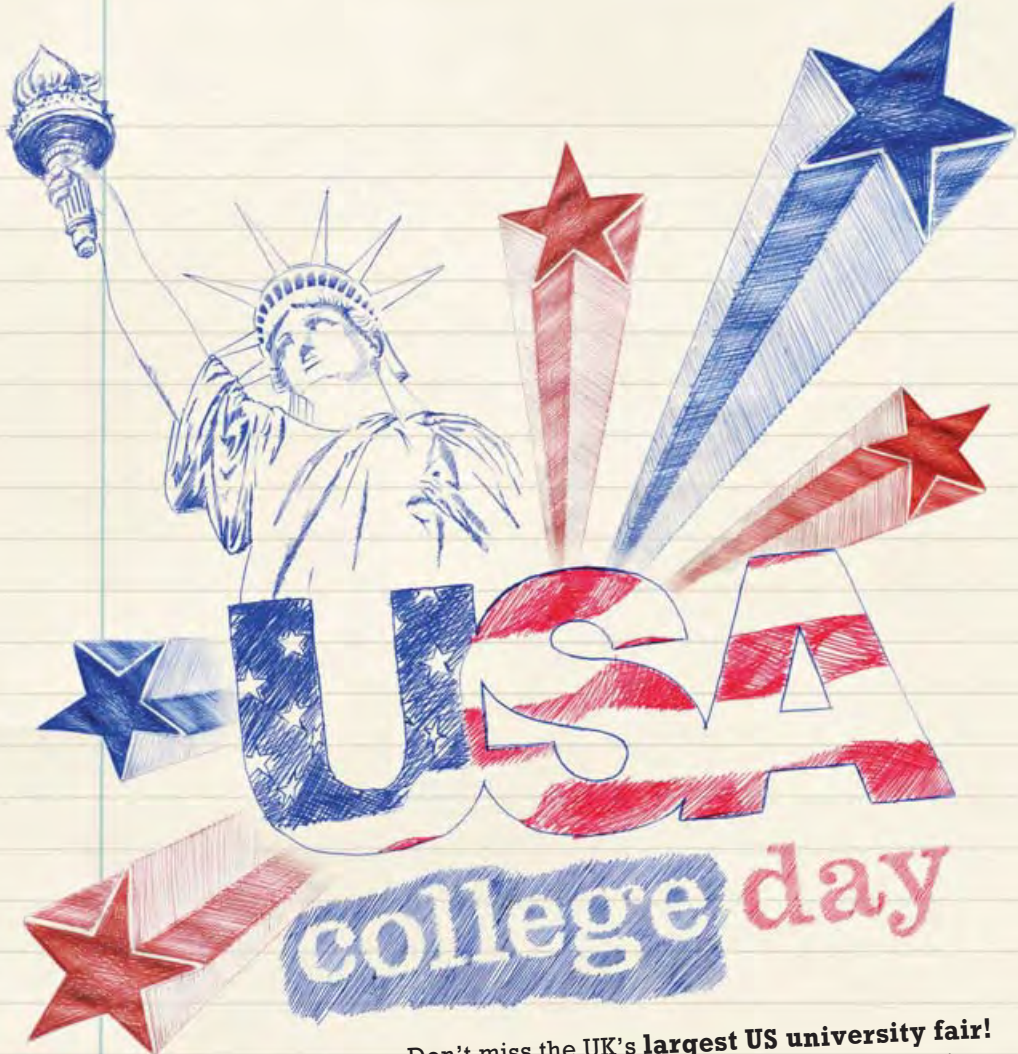
My office is very sociable. When we travel for audits, the team can vary from four to

twelve people. We tend to stay in the same place and have dinner together, which is nice. My cohort (and the years above and below us) goes out every Friday after work for drinks or sometimes activities such as crazy golf. There's around 30 of us. We also have department socials at least once a month – for example we went to Go Ape in the summer.

One step ahead

I wanted to join a programme that allowed me to gain the ACA qualification, which is the same qualification that you take as a graduate. By the time I'm 23 I'll have finished the programme and be eligible for an assistant manager position, whereas graduates the same age will be several years behind.

I will complete 15 exams in total and have a few weeks off work at a time to go to college and learn the content for each one. I've already completed ICAEW's Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business (ICAEW CFAB), which covers the first six modules of the ACA. I also attend courses on topics such as client interaction, coaching new starters and using relevant software. I have support from a buddy in the year above who can help with exams, and a counsellor who helps me tailor my career path. ©



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Taking charity into account

Sarah is a geography graduate and the financial controller at the Aga Khan Foundation.



After university I got a job as an environmental consultant, but it wasn't quite what I wanted to do. I wanted to work in the charity sector and, after speaking to people about how to achieve this, I chose to train as an accountant. I applied to several graduate schemes that involved studying for the ACA to qualify as an ICAEW chartered accountant, and I was offered a job at PwC. Before starting, I spent six months travelling across Russia, Mongolia, China and India.

Acing the ACA

My role was in audit, which involved spending a few weeks at clients' offices to check their financial records and ensure that they were correct. I worked with a range of clients – from recruitment companies to the Duchy of Cornwall – and went to Delhi and New York.

I qualified as an ICAEW chartered accountant after three years. The ACA involves 15 exams, which I sat in sets of three. Every six months or so, PwC gave me six weeks off from work: I would go to college for four weeks and then I'd spend two weeks revising before sitting the exams.

The ACA helped me develop my technical accounting skills as well as my people, teamwork, analytical and presentation skills, scepticism, and project and time management.

A well stamped passport

After qualifying I joined PKF Littlejohn as a humanitarian aid project auditor. I worked on European Commission grants for humanitarian aid projects in developing countries. My job was to check whether the projects and money were being handled correctly.

I spent 60 per cent of my time travelling, which was great. I went to Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Mali and Nigeria, to name just a few. I'd visit the main office of the charity (usually in the capital city), the field office (usually in a remote place) and the project site, such as a refugee camp, village or hospital, to speak to the people receiving aid. The rest of my time was spent in London, either writing up reports or planning for the next trip.

A helping hand

I moved to a job as a project finance manager at Ark, a charity with a network of schools in the UK. I managed the budgets for projects such as bringing a school into the network, building a new school or a capital project (such as a new building at an existing school).

I've just started my new job as the financial controller at the Aga Khan Foundation, which focuses on long-term investment all over the world in civil society, education, health and rural development. My career so far has made me realise that international development is definitely where my interests lie. ☺



When it comes to career choices, is your child feeling a little lost?



FUTUREWISE Direct

Futurewise supports young people to explore their career aspirations and make informed decisions about subject choices, higher education, apprenticeships and future employment. The programme helps young people between 15 and 19 to:

- think about subjects choices (A Levels, Highers, IB or equivalent)
- understand how their strengths, interests and personality fit together
- consider university options & alternatives to higher education
 - Full profiling with a guidance interview, follow up guidance profile and report
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Get in touch!

If you would like to find out more about Inspiring Futures and Futurewise, please email helpline@inspiringfutures.org.uk or phone +44 (0)1491 820381

"Completing the Futurewise profile was a helpful experience – it literally opened my eyes to the future."

Futurewise student

"As a result of the Futurewise programme, my daughter feels immeasurably happier and is really enthused. I feel the support my daughter has been given was not only professional but totally individual."

Angela Young, Parent

I'm glad my daughter didn't follow the crowd

Jennifer is Jade's mum (see profile on page 49). She talked to TARGETcareers about Jade's decision to do an apprenticeship instead of going to university.



I expected that Jade would go to university because it seemed to be the route every teenager took when they finished school, but I encouraged her to pursue whatever she enjoyed most. After doing her research she showed me the apprenticeship programmes she had discovered that were run by the Big 4 accounting firms. She seemed really enthusiastic and I agreed that it was an excellent alternative to university.

Changing perceptions

I assumed that apprenticeships were minimum-wage manual-labour jobs – I definitely didn't know you could become a chartered accountant through one! I didn't know anybody who worked in finance, so in my mind it involved sitting at a computer all day. From observing Jade's first two years at EY I know that isn't the case. It was quite a specific career path for Jade to go down, but that's no longer a fear of mine since I learned that her professional qualification, the ACA, will open up other avenues of work and she can progress as far as any graduate. No one in our family has gone to university but most of Jade's friends have. They worry about their chances of finding a job after they graduate, while Jade is earning money and gaining practical work experience.

Work, study and travel

I was nervous about Jade going straight from school into such a huge company, but she took it in her stride. I do sometimes feel that she takes on a lot of work; however, she knows when to say no if she is too busy. Jade has gained so much confidence and I think she has managed her studying well. So far she has passed all her exams first time. EY gives her study leave and lets her finish work early during exam periods. Jade occasionally stays away from home to be at client sites, but rarely for longer than a week at a time and she seems happy with that variety in her work environment.

Living independently

Jade is usually out with friends on a Friday, and at weekends she goes to the gym and spends time with her partner or her father and me. Now that her time is more limited than when she was at sixth form, she has learned to make the most of the time that she has. Jade moved out after three months on the programme to a flat that she rents with her partner. I think it was a good decision as she has matured a lot and has coped well with taking on that extra responsibility. The only bad thing is how much I miss her! ☺

Every bit of work experience counts

Dan is a business manager at Lloyds Banking Group, after completing his project management apprenticeship.



I did very well at school and college. I'd even been to open days at the University of Cambridge and won an award there, but I just knew that university wasn't for me. I was working part time at an Apple store during my AS levels and one of my customers told me that they worked at Lloyds Banking Group and were starting up an apprenticeship. I applied and got an interview.

I did a higher apprenticeship in project management that led to a level 4 qualification. It was two years long, with two exams and several pieces of coursework. We were trained to be junior project managers and I did everything from leading small projects to helping two different parts of the bank come together as one.

Discovering project management

Project management stood out to me because it sounded different and I thought it suited my skills and characteristics the best. I like managing uncertainty and I don't like doing things that are repetitive. As a project manager, you are managing situations where big changes are involved and your work really could be different every day. It is a lot of responsibility to get things right, but you have some really good times with the people you work with.

Beyond the apprenticeship

Project management gives you fundamental skills that can be applied to lots of different job roles. In fact, what I'm doing now is completely different to my project manager role as an apprentice. At the end of my apprenticeship I was approached about an opportunity to be an associate director in commercial banking and I took it up. I started working in commercial banking insight, which is a team that looks at the needs of clients and how to adapt our products and services to make them better. I helped manage the research around new products, which involved online surveys, client focus groups and customer testing.

Work experience

I used to do a lot of fundraising and volunteering for local charities, such as a kennels. One of the things I did there was to help them out with their website and media content. I also worked part time at Pizza Hut, which helped me get confident when speaking to people and finding solutions to their needs. Then there was my job at an Apple store. I don't believe I'd be at Lloyds Banking Group if it wasn't for Apple, but I wouldn't have been at Apple if it wasn't for Pizza Hut, and I wouldn't have been at Pizza Hut if it wasn't for the volunteering opportunities. ©

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Pathways to Property is a free programme introducing careers in property by connecting you with those already working in the industry.

Led by the Reading Real Estate Foundation at Henley Business School, University of Reading the programme is for GCSE and sixth form students and will help you find out where a career in property could lead.

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A free OOC (open online course)

Bursaries and financial support available.

'The experience at the Pathways to Property Summer School is one I will never forget. I have learnt so much about future options for careers, and speaking to industry professionals is an experience you can't get anywhere else.'

Lauren, Summer School participant 2017

For further information and to get involved visit www.reading.ac.uk/pathways-to-property or email pathways2property@rref.reading.ac.uk



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Key: IFC = inside front cover, IBC = inside back cover, OBC = outside back cover

Editor Rachael Millsom
Assistant editor Emily Dunn
Design Thomas Gray
Proofreader Jacky Barrett
Advertising Jon Mallott,
 sales product champion;
 the TARGETcareers sales team;
 the TARGETcareers campaign
 management team
Circulation Patty Shufflebotham
Commercial director Jon Mallott
Sales director Simon Rogers
Production director Jane Anderson
Group chief executive officer
 Graham Storey

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 GTI Media Ltd
 The Fountain Building
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**Katie Highmoor****Education:** A-levels in Maths, History and Business**Role:** Customer Contact Centre Apprentice – Supervision – Retail & Authorisations**Why did you choose to do an apprenticeship?**

I never liked the idea of university – my friends were all so keen on going and getting a degree along with the party lifestyle, but it wasn't for me, as I have always been quite work driven and like achieving things. An apprenticeship is a great way to learn skills on the job and really gain the work experience that employers look for, as well as getting paid. Meanwhile my friends are looking to rack up debt and graduate with very little experience. In comparison I'll have been working for 2-3 years.

What has been your apprenticeship highlight so far?

I have only been in the apprenticeship for a few months now and I have already learned so much! I work in a contact centre and have been learning about scams and how they affect consumers daily, as well as what processes consumers should take to avoid scams. I have also learned about the FCA systems, and take calls from firms and answer their queries. If you don't know the answer, there's always someone in my team to lend a hand.

**Jamie Fisher****Education:** A-levels in Maths, Economics and PE**Role:** Compliance & Risk Apprentice in Event Supervision – Supervision – Investment, Wholesale & Specialists**Why did you choose to do an apprenticeship?**

After my A-levels I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, all that I did know is that I wanted to expand my knowledge within Financial Services. Following some research, I found an apprenticeship within Supervision. This apprenticeship is ideal for anyone who wishes to develop a thorough understanding of the industry, whilst gaining a professional qualification without the huge debts associated with university. I can honestly say that I enjoy coming into work and increasing my knowledge, whilst also getting paid for it!

What has been your apprenticeship highlight so far?

There have been many highlights throughout the short time I have been at the FCA, but I would say it is the people that I have been lucky enough to work with that has made my time here so enjoyable. Everyone is so supportive and encouraging, and you're made to feel comfortable asking any questions about your work whilst helping your confidence grow. This caring atmosphere has enabled me to develop my understanding of the industry as well as improve my skills; from written communication to using a variety of regulatory software.

**Amira Kathawala****Education:** A-levels in Maths, Geography and Sociology**Role:** Assistant Accountant Apprentice in Finance – Operations**Why did you choose to do an apprenticeship?**

I chose an apprenticeship because of the flexibility of the programme and the guarantee of a job, which is now hard to find after graduating. After attending university for a year, I realised it wasn't for me. I didn't like the idea of sitting in a lecture for two hours when I could be productive and learn at the same time. I believe I am a practical learner, and by receiving training on the job whilst learning about it, I will be able to succeed in my exams. Becoming an accountant is my aim whether I get paid to become one, or go to university and face a £27k debt.

What has been your apprenticeship highlight so far?

I am extremely fortunate to be given this opportunity because I work in a wonderful environment with lots of support. The highlight would be that I am able to rotate around my department, and work within different teams and roles. I work with accountants who can support me if I'm struggling with my qualification, which is really helpful as they give me a fresh insight and they have first-hand experience.



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