

TARGET
careers

*Inspiring possibilities
for school leavers*

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

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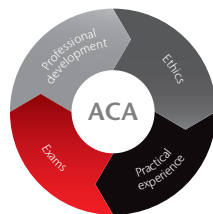




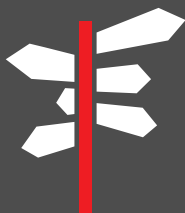
Key facts about ICAEW Chartered Accountants



There are over 146,000 in
more than 160 countries



They have completed
ICAEW's qualification,
the ACA



They have come through
both school leaver and
graduate entry routes



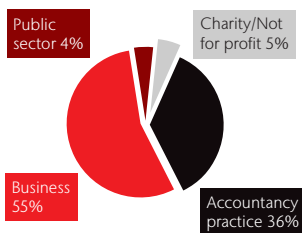
Globally, their average
salary plus bonus 0-2 years
post qualification is £49.9k



83 of the FTSE 100
companies have one
on the board






Those with a degree
come from a wide
range of disciplines



They work across a wide
variety of sectors and
industries

There are many ways
for your child to qualify
as an ICAEW Chartered
Accountant.

To find out how, visit:
[icaew.com/parents](https://www.icaew.com/parents)

-  [facebook.com/icaewcareers](https://www.facebook.com/icaewcareers)
-  [@ICAEW_Careers](https://twitter.com/ICAEW_Careers)
-  [youtube.com/icaewcareers](https://www.youtube.com/icaewcareers)



Careers in accountancy

– a foreword from ICAEW

Paths to Professional Careers – a Parent's Guide is written to help you whatever career your child decides to go into. We'd like to take a moment to tell you about opportunities in accountancy.

There's a reason more and more students are deciding to pursue professional careers as chartered accountants, largely due to their stability, solid progression and competitive salaries. If your child decided to become a chartered accountant, they would be able to work in virtually any industry, as every business requires financial experts.

ICAEW is a world-leading professional membership organisation and we are committed to delivering our qualification – the ACA – to aspiring chartered accountants all over the world.

We work with over 3,300 employers globally to support talented school leavers and graduates through the ACA, which is a combination of practical work experience, exams, ethics training and professional development.

We're proud to partner with TARGETcareers on this guide, as we're keen to inform you of all the possible entry routes your child could take to start their career. We understand it can often be difficult to provide the right level of advice to your child around their career options, so we want to make sure that you, as a parent, are as informed as possible.

There are numerous routes to becoming an ICAEW Chartered Accountant. In recent years we've seen increased training opportunities for school and college leavers through higher apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and our AAT-ACA Fast Track programme. We also work closely with universities around the world to incorporate and integrate the ACA into students' studies as much as we can; for example we help academics align their syllabuses to the ACA, which means students don't have to duplicate their studies unnecessarily after graduating.

Employers we work with are actively recruiting those from non-relevant degrees too. So if your child is considering university, it's important they pick something they are passionate about; they can still go on to study the ACA and become an ICAEW Chartered Accountant regardless of their degree discipline.

We hope you are able to use this guide as a point of reference for direction and guidance when it comes to you supporting your child's career and study choices. We know you want them to have a successful career and hope that this guide contributes to them making an informed decision on what career path is right for them.

Clare Power

Head of student recruitment, ICAEW

LLOYDS
BANKING
GROUP



"I HAD THE GRADES FOR UNI, BUT THIS APPRENTICESHIP GIVES ME MORE."

THE BEST START TO A REWARDING CAREER

At Lloyds Banking Group, we see apprenticeships as an outstanding route to a rewarding professional career.

Take Will. As a Project Management Apprentice, he develops his professional skills and knowledge by working alongside experts every day. Like all of our apprentices, he enjoys the advantages of a permanent role with a proper salary and excellent benefits, while studying for a recognised qualification.

For school leavers and graduates, we offer a diverse range of long-term career opportunities - from customer service to marketing, from IT to business and financial management. All our colleagues have a role that matters; helping us to be the best bank for customers.

To discover our current opportunities, visit:

lloydsbankinggrouptalent.com

To view relevant blogs and general advice, visit:

discoverwhatmatters.co.uk



Will Garrett

Project Management
Higher Apprentice

DISCOVER WHAT
MATTERS



Contents

Your child's career

| | |
|--|---|
| Supporting your child | 5 |
| Career choices – be a good guide | 6 |

Work or university?

| | |
|--|----|
| School leaver programmes, higher apprenticeships and sponsored degrees explained | 10 |
| Which route is best financially?..... | 12 |
| Will an employer programme narrow my child's options? | 16 |
| Will my child miss out on the university experience? | 18 |
| Where will my child flourish? | 20 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Researching employers' programmes – track down the detail | 22 |
| Researching degree courses – spot the differences..... | 24 |
| Degrees and employment prospects – top five myths | 26 |
| How to choose a degree and apply successfully..... | 28 |

Routes into careers

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| How to get into finance | 32 |
| How to get into engineering | 34 |
| How to get into business..... | 36 |
| How to get into IT | 38 |
| People profiles..... | 41 |
| Advertisers' index | 48 |



If your child decides to go to university then encourage them to study something they're passionate about.

Employers are looking for graduates from all degree backgrounds.





*Join straight
after school*

*Work in Assurance,
Consulting, Deals or Tax*

No matter

*Go to uni
and study
Accounting*

*Flying Start degree
programmes*

which path

*Join us as
a graduate*

*Talent Academy, Internships,
Work Placements and Jobs*

you choose



Take the opportunity of a lifetime

Traditionally, there's only been one route when school comes to an end. University. Degree. Career. But things have changed. Our school leaver programme, just like our graduate programme, offers structured career development as well as learning on-the-job, and study towards business qualifications. Like a graduate, you'll get to work with all sorts of companies – helping them measure their performance, improve the way they work and tackle their commercial challenges. So whichever path leads you to us, and we have a few, we'll take your career further. Join PwC. We'll help you realise your potential.

pwc.com/uk/schools



Supporting your child

Chatting with your child about their interests and motivations can help them to think about their options at 18.

If your child is planning on taking A levels, Scottish Highers or the International Baccalaureate, they might be considering their next steps. Do they know what career they want? Will they go to university? What about joining an employer on a higher apprenticeship or sponsored degree programme?

This guide is designed to support you in supporting your child. You'll find advice on helping them to think about career choices (page 6) and whether to take a full-time degree or an employer programme that combines earning and learning (pages 10 to 28). There's also an overview of paths into four key career areas (finance, engineering, business and IT) starting on page 32 – we cover an additional eight sectors online at targetcareers.co.uk.

Is parental help welcome?


In 2014 we asked over 3,000 undergraduates about their parents' involvement in their decisions about careers and university. The majority (66 per cent) thought it was right for parents to seek to influence such choices.

When choosing a career, 81 per cent took their

parents' views into account but made their own decisions; 57 per cent did so when choosing a degree. The full report, *Parental influence on children's academic and employment choices*, is available at gtimedia.co.uk/expertise.

Discussing options

Whatever path your child pursues, they are more likely to succeed if it motivates them. They might find it useful to use you as a sounding board, so make time to chat. You'll find some starting points overleaf to help your child consider what interests them, with additional advice at targetcareers.co.uk.

Nasrin Lalji is early careers manager at construction company Wates, which recruits both apprentices and graduates. She advises: 'It's important to understand what your child enjoys doing and what they are good at. Focus on their strengths to help you and them to identify the potential careers they could consider.' 



Career choices – be a good guide

It's not essential for your child to choose a career while still at school. However, giving it some initial thought is wise.

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. Don't panic

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.

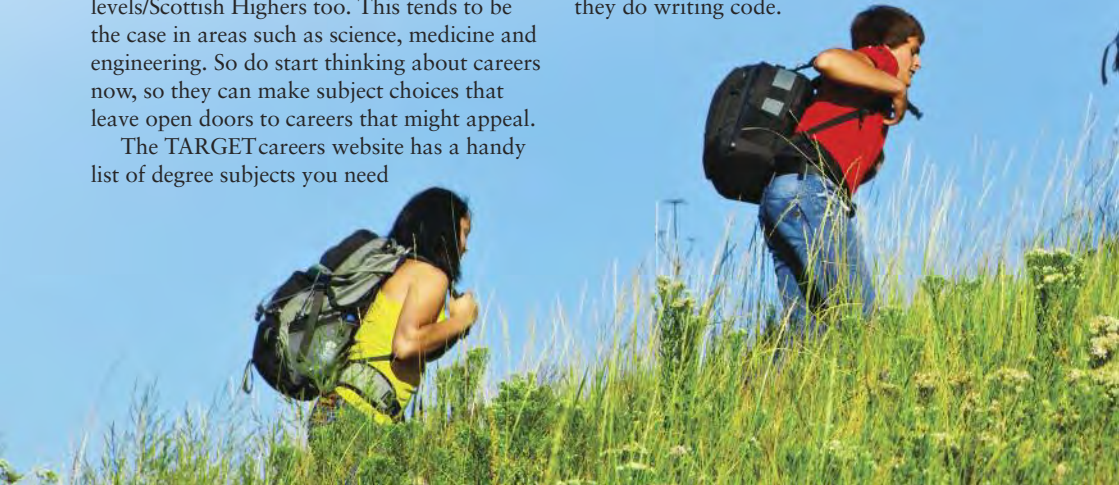
However, some careers do require a particular degree or vocational training path, and often specific subject choices for A levels/Scottish Highers too. This tends to be the case in areas such as science, medicine and engineering. So do start thinking about careers now, so they can make subject choices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

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. **T**

More help from TARGETcareers

The following content on targetcareers.co.uk gives more help with career and subject choice.

- Read overviews of careers in 12 key areas and the skills required at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors.
- Find out 'Which degree do you need for which career?' [go to 'Careers advice' then 'Choices about uni'].

Confidence through knowledge

From cyber risk to climate change, more than 115,000 CII members work in a surprising range of sectors.

CII's Discover campaigns and free membership give students and teachers access to our impressive networks and insights.

Make an informed choice – Discover Risk.



discover@cii.co.uk
ciicareers.co.uk



CII – making career connections

Your child is currently at an important and, yes, exciting stage of life. With many options available, from apprenticeships to university, making an informed choice can feel tricky. We hope this overview helps you and your child make informed choices that give them the best chance of success – whatever their career.

The CII is the world's largest professional body for two distinct sectors – insurance, and financial planning. Both are actively seeking new recruits from school/college and university.

Our 115,000 members give us a helicopter view of recruitment trends – whether your child is seeking an apprenticeship for a local small business, or a graduate scheme at a global company.

Different ways to achieve

There are varied routes to success, through different entry points. The key drivers are determination and ability. In other words, business leaders do not need to have gone to university.

Insurance and financial planning companies have a diverse population – some graduates, some non-graduates; some extroverts, some introverts. There are so many roles available, that the key is to research and understand oneself to identify suitable roles. Subjects studied are not important for the vast majority of roles.

Insurance – a hidden gem

Insurance is not just about cars, houses and holidays. The UK sector is the world's third largest market and the heart of international insurance and reinsurance. That creates some very interesting opportunities to look at risks as diverse as climate, cyber, fine art, international politics and sport.

The sector offers excellent support through every stage of a career. That includes having a buddy, a mentor, support and payment for CII's globally-recognised professional qualifications. Our ACII designation is like a second passport.

In fact, the sector's global nature is one of its strengths and securities. Insurance will always be needed and the growth of the middle classes in Asia and Latin America, for example, offers new opportunities.

Financial planning – managing wealth

Financial planning is an emerging profession. It is the ideal area of finance for those who want to help people secure their financial future – and see the results. This can be in a back-office role like a paraplanner – for those who prefer working with data and solving problems; or in a people-focused role as a financial planner – for those who like to meet people, build relationships and grow a business.

Unlike insurance, the vast majority of our financial planning members work in the UK. This is because the information they use to advise clients is subject to UK regulation – with each budget comes a potential impact on clients' financial plans.

The ageing demographic of the financial planning community makes it the perfect time to consider a career in this area.

How can the CII help?

Our free Discover membership gives full-time students access to our sector insights, local and regional events or just a cup of coffee and a chat with someone who does a job your child would like to do. The CII's LinkedIn presence is an opportunity to connect with the sector and find work experience that could lead on to more.

We also deliver free Discover Risk and Discover Fortunes events to Y11-13 students across the country, as well as Apprenticeship events featuring current and former apprentices talking about their experience of not going to university and succeeding in the sector.

Want to find out more?

Email discover@cii.co.uk and our team will be happy to help.

School leaver programmes, higher apprenticeships and sponsored degrees explained

Find out about work-based training for 18-year-olds who want to gain higher-level qualifications – including university degrees – while earning.

Higher apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and sponsored degrees usually involve starting work with an employer, earning a salary and studying part-time towards relevant qualifications. This often involves attending college or university one day a week, or in blocks of a week or more at a time. Tuition fees and any associated costs are typically paid by the employer.

Scheme lengths vary, though three or four years is common. 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.

Different organisations refer to their opportunities in slightly different ways. For example, some programmes labelled as 'higher apprenticeships' could equally be described as 'sponsored degrees'. The qualifications on offer also vary from employer to employer.

The route into every profession is different, so your child needs an idea of their goal before starting such a scheme. In some careers the options open to non-graduates are relatively limited. For example, an undergraduate degree is a standard

requirement for anyone who wants to go on to qualify as a teacher or solicitor. You can find out more about routes into different careers on pages 32 to 39 and at targetcareers.co.uk.

What is a higher apprenticeship?

Higher apprenticeships are typically open to applicants with A levels or equivalent qualifications (such as Scottish Highers, an advanced apprenticeship or an NVQ level 3). Once they've started work they study part time towards a qualification at level 4 or above on the national qualifications framework:

- level 4/5 is equivalent to a higher education certificate, higher education diploma or a foundation degree (the first year of a degree)
- level 6 is equivalent to a bachelors degree
- level 7 is equivalent to a masters degree.

The qualifications offered depend on the employer; examples include HNCs, HNDs and bachelors degrees.

There are also lower levels of apprenticeship available (intermediate and advanced). Applicants for these typically only need GCSEs, though students with A levels or equivalent are usually free to apply if they wish.

What is a school leaver programme?

Like higher apprenticeships, school leaver programmes are normally aimed at those with A levels (or equivalent). The term can be used to describe a broad range of different types of paid training scheme that combine earning and learning, and some employers refer to their higher apprenticeships or sponsored degree programmes in this way. Such a scheme might include a degree and/or professional qualifications, sometimes at the same level as the qualifications taken by graduates seeking entry to a particular career.

They are typically offered by large businesses and organisations, particularly in retail, accountancy and banking but in plenty of other industries too.

What is a sponsored degree?

You'll come across references to both sponsored degrees and sponsored degree programmes on companies' websites; the terms are used in different ways by different organisations. Broadly speaking, they refer to

a degree programme associated with a particular employer, with financial support available for students selected by the employer. The company typically chooses the degree course because of its relevance for potential future employees and may play a part in designing the course content.

Some sponsored degrees operate in a similar way to higher apprenticeships and school leaver programmes: students will be paid employees, spend most of their time working and attend university part-time or in blocks, with tuition fees paid in full. In other cases companies offer partial financial support to students who have gone to university full time in the traditional way, alongside paid work in the summer vacations.

What is a degree apprenticeship?

Degree apprenticeships are a new option combining university study and paid work. Apprentices will gain a bachelors or masters degree and the cost of course fees is met by the government and employers. **T**



Which route is best financially?

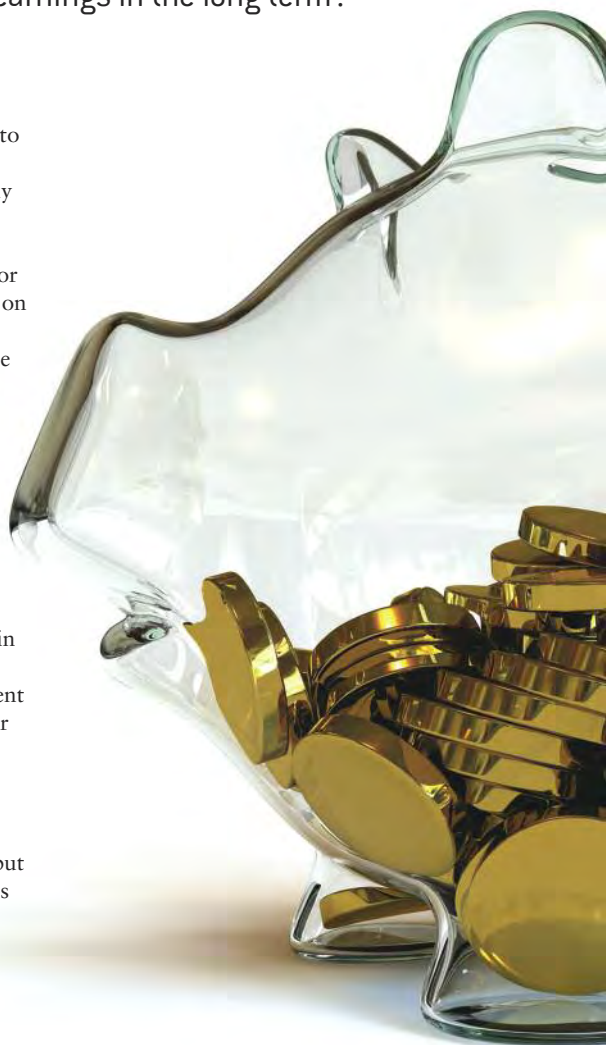
Doing a degree before starting work usually results in student debt. Is this cancelled out by higher earnings in the long term?

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 before starting work 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 KPMG's audit school and college leaver programme. Examples in IT include sponsored degree programmes at CGI and Capgemini.

However, not all programmes aimed at 18-year-old school leavers are designed to put them on a par with graduates. In these cases they might find that in the long term they earn less than those with a degree. For example, school leaver programmes in law aren't currently designed to allow you to qualify as a solicitor or barrister, which are the highest level roles with salaries to match.





Long-term progression

Make sure your child's research includes finding out about the qualifications they need to progress long term. For example, in engineering a few companies offer the chance to take a bachelors degree part time while working; however, if they eventually want to become a chartered engineer (the highest level) it's easiest if they have a masters degree. Many engineering students who take a degree before starting work complete a four-year masters level course, giving them a simpler path to becoming chartered. (See page 34 for more on getting into engineering.)

Earnings v. debt

If your child goes to university before getting a job they are likely to leave with student debt, which will then accrue interest. The total amount they repay will vary depending on how quickly they pay it off (the more they earn the faster they will repay so the less interest will build up) and whether they have paid off all their debt 30 years after they graduate (at which point any remaining debt is written off). For example, if they borrow £37,500 and take 29 years to repay then based on current interest rates they would end up repaying around £52,500 in total.

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. If you divide £52,500 over a typical working life of 45 years, then they'd only need to earn £1,167 a year more as a graduate than a



non-graduate to make their degree a good financial investment.

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

Focus on career choice

When thinking about future earnings, focus first on what career path your child wants to take rather than whether or not to go to university. Yes, there are some very well paid jobs for which a degree is almost always necessary, such as investment banking and being a City lawyer. However, if this isn't what they want to do or they're not realistically going to get the grades they need to get in, this is actually a bit irrelevant. If they go to university and then decide to try to break into a competitive industry with low entry-level pay (or long unpaid internships) then they will probably earn less than school friends who decided to take an apprenticeship in a better-paid industry, at least in the short term. This may well be the case if they want to work in fashion design, journalism, broadcasting, the theatre, the film industry, the charity sector or museums, among others.

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 26 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.

When looking at figures showing how much school leavers and graduates earn at the same company remember that school leavers join at a younger age and will probably have had several pay rises by the time graduates of the same age join the company.

Advice for the undecided

If your child isn't yet sure what career they want, it's difficult to judge whether a school leaver programme would be as beneficial as a degree for their career. However, if they are still unsure about their career direction by the time they need to make applications for university or school leaver programmes then they might prefer to apply to university to keep their options open rather than trying to convince recruiters to hire them onto programmes they're not sure they want to do. **1**



There are many ways to qualify as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

Employers offer a range of school leaver and graduate routes to suit your child.





Recommend a smarter route to a business career.

Today's school leavers face many choices. With a global reputation for nurturing young talent, we can empower you to help your child make the right choice. We offer scholarships to those going to university, while the award-winning EY School Leaver programme offers a head start in business straight from school.

Help your child make the right choice
ukcareers.ey.com/schools



Advisory | Assurance | Transactions | Tax

Will an employer programme narrow my child's options?

Schemes such as higher apprenticeships and school leaver programmes are aimed at applicants who know what type of career they want.

If your child takes an 'earning and learning' route at 18 then they will be trained for a specific career. The question of 'how specific?' varies from scheme to scheme. Some of the broadest involve completing placements in different business functions (eg sales, HR, marketing or finance) and studying towards a qualification in 'business' or 'management'. Other programmes lead to one very specific field, eg cyber security or aerospace software development.

Such schemes aren't appropriate if your child doesn't know what career they want. They are also not the best idea if they have several options in mind and wouldn't be able to explore all of them on the programme.

Changing career later on

If a programme includes a degree, then in theory this should be transferable to other careers. There are many entry-level jobs for which a university degree is required, but for which any subject is acceptable. However, your child would need to give convincing reasons as to why they had chosen to train for one career and apply for graduate jobs in another.

As an example, let's say that they completed a sponsored degree programme in software engineering, then applied for graduate roles as a marketing assistant. If they

had helped out with marketing activities at work and found that they enjoyed them, that would be a clear reason for the change of direction and would show that they had experience in marketing on which to base their decision. If they hadn't, they'd need to have fitted in activities related to marketing outside of work, to show they'd tried it and knew they liked it. Here students who'd been to university full time might have the advantage, as they would probably have had more time and opportunity to, say, take a marketing internship in a vacation or been marketing rep for the university summer ball.

Qualifications below degree level are less likely to help if your child wants to change career completely. This is because there isn't really a recruitment market focused on, say, HNC leavers with any subject, whereas there is a recruitment market for graduates who've studied any subject.

It's also worth checking whether programmes that interest your child have a 'tie-in' period – they might be expected to work for the company for a set period of time after finishing their qualifications.

Keeping options open

If your child wants to keep their options open, they could take a degree and explore different careers on the side. They *might* be able to do this on a sponsored degree



programme that doesn't involve too much travel, overtime or studying in their free time. However, they're more likely to be able to do this as a full-time student – providing they don't have to work long hours in a part-time job or spend several hours a day commuting to lectures.

For example, a history undergraduate considering careers in teaching, law or accountancy might join the university debating society, stand for election to become treasurer of the choral society and spend a morning a week in term time volunteering at a local school. They might then line up work experience with schools, law firms and accountancy firms for their university vacations, and watch trials at their local court when they have time.

Of course, if your child goes to university to keep their options open then they should consider whether they need to study a particular subject – see the box below. It's also worth considering with your child whether they would realistically have the motivation to explore different careers on top of their studies. **T**

More help from **TARGETcareers**

See targetcareers.co.uk for which careers do and don't require a specific degree. Look under 'Careers advice', then 'Choices about uni'.

Will my child miss out on the university experience?

Joining an employer at 18 isn't a traditional university experience, even if the scheme includes a degree. Does this matter?

If your child is considering a higher apprenticeship, sponsored degree programme or school leaver programme, you might be concerned about whether they would miss out on the broader experience of being a full-time student.

The answer will depend on which aspects of the university experience they would value. You might find it helpful to talk through which of the following appeal.

1. Studying a subject that really interests them for its own sake.
2. Being able to choose the modules and projects that most appeal to them.
3. Moving away from home and living independently.
4. Meeting new people and making new friends.
5. Learning new things and having new experiences.
6. Getting involved in activities such as sport, theatre or politics.
7. Having time to explore their interests, values and job options before choosing a career.
8. Being able to socialise spontaneously.

Academic freedom

If academic freedom appeals (points 1 and 2), they probably do need to go to university independently rather than joining a school leaver programme, so they're free to study what they like.

New experiences

If it's more about leaving home, meeting new people and doing new things (points 3 to 5), both university and school leaver programmes provide these opportunities. Many programmes pay enough to be able to rent a room, and all involve new people and experiences. If your child likes company, they might actually be happier at work surrounded by colleagues than at university studying for an arts degree, on which they'd typically only have a few hours of lectures and tutorials each week and be expected to spend the majority of their time writing essays alone.

One difference will be in who your child spends their time with. As a full-time student they would mix largely with people of their own age but who were studying a variety of subjects and going on to a range of careers. In contrast, on a school leaver programme they would have colleagues of all ages but who worked in a limited range of careers. However, there would still be the chance to meet others of the same age, both new joiners at their company and those with whom they would study.

Clubs and societies

If your child is keen to join societies (point 6), in theory they could join the local rowing club or audition for an amateur musical while in employment. Large companies often even have a club or two of their own. However, some school leaver programmes involve quite

WORK OR UNIVERSITY?



a bit of travel and/or studying at home in an employee's free time, which can limit their ability to take on commitments outside work. Your child might also fit in and make friends more quickly with fellow students, who will largely be the same age as them.

'Me time'

Going to university in the traditional way offers time and opportunities to explore career direction (point 7) before making a decision. Students can use the vacations to get work experience in different areas, try career-related activities on campus (eg writing for the student newspaper) or make use of the careers service's contacts. Some employer programmes offer the chance to try different roles, but the scope is relatively limited. See page 16 for more detail.

Full-time students typically have more choice than employees as to how to divide their time between work and socialising (point 8). Your child might value the freedom and flexibility to pop round to friends' rooms for a spontaneous cuppa, stay up late without an early start for work the next day or spend a Tuesday afternoon learning to unicycle.

However, getting a decent degree requires motivation and commitment to a subject. If it's currently only the social side of university that appeals to your child, they might want to consider a well planned gap year to earn some money, try new things and form a better idea of what they want to do. See the 'Taking a gap year' section of targetcareers.co.uk – you'll find it under 'Careers advice'. **T**

Where will my child flourish?

Traditional university study isn't for everyone – nor is earning and learning. Consider which would suit your child personally.

Your child's motivation levels will be a key factor in whether they succeed in the career or educational path they set out on at 18. Both traditional degree study and employer

programmes such as higher apprenticeships can be hard work and usually require participants to spend time studying at home by themselves as well as attending formal teaching sessions at college or university.

Intrinsic interest in their subject or job will help see them through, as will learning in a way that suits their personality. For example, 35 hours a week of solitary, theoretical study might be perfect for an academically inclined introvert but is unlikely to suit an extrovert with a hands-on approach to life.

Would university suit?

Many degrees require a lot of private study, and students typically make their own decisions about how hard they wish to work. So a key consideration is whether your child will be motivated enough to crack on by themselves – and to keep going month after month. Genuine interest in their subject will be more helpful than a nebulous desire to 'get a good degree'.

Universities typically expect students to spend around 35 to 45 hours per week in total studying. For many subjects there is less contact time than at school, which means that

a higher percentage of their time should be spent in private study. This is particularly the case with arts and social science subjects: on some courses a typical week involves only six or eight hours of teaching time. Science subjects tend to have more contact hours (20 hours a week is a typical figure). How much private study would your child be happy with?

University students also tend to be much less closely monitored than school pupils – on many courses it's possible to slack off for weeks or even months at a time without anyone commenting on it. As an example, an English degree will typically consist of lectures (listening to a talk in groups of around 20 to 100) and seminars or tutorials (interactive sessions in groups of up to about 20). Attendance at seminars or tutorials is typically monitored, and students may be asked to explain themselves if they miss multiple sessions. Attendance at lectures often isn't monitored. Would your child be conscientious about turning up if nobody chased them?

Most degrees aim to develop a student's understanding of a subject from an academic perspective. This can often be the case even on courses that sound quite vocational, though some have practical elements such as lab sessions. Is your child interested in knowledge and intellectual enquiry for their own sake?

On most university courses, the main outcome of piece of work (eg an essay) will be a grade. Will this be sufficient reward, or would they prefer to see their hard work having a positive impact on other people or on a business?

Would working life suit?

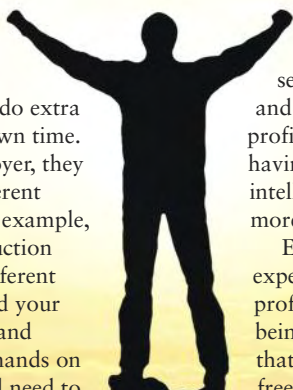
School leavers on schemes such as higher apprenticeships and sponsored degree programmes spend the majority of their time working, with time off to attend college or university. They usually do extra study at home in their own time. Depending on the employer, they might also travel to different locations for work – for example, employees in the construction industry need to visit different construction sites. Would your child be happy juggling and prioritising multiple demands on their time? If they would need to

leave home, are they ready to live independently?

The topics that your child studies will be chosen by their employer and relate to their working life. Are they genuinely excited by the career in question? Would they enjoy being able to apply what they were learning to real-world situations, or would they prefer the freedom to study what they liked?

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 should be able to see their work have an impact on clients and colleagues – and possibly even on profits. Would your child feel motivated by having a real, practical effect, or does intellectual success currently appeal to them more?

Employees on such programmes are expected to behave and dress in a professional way. Would your child welcome being treated as a grown-up or resent the fact that friends on full-time degrees had more freedom to act as they pleased? **1**



Researching employers' programmes – track down the detail

What to research about programmes your child is considering as an alternative to university – and where to find the information.

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. 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; the box opposite has links to 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 10). 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 had 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. ①

Careers fairs

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

- www.regionalskillsevents.co.uk
- www.skillscymru.co.uk
- www.skillsotland.co.uk

Researching degree courses

– spot the differences

Degree courses vary widely. Examine the detail with your child to see how the ones that interest them differ.

Choosing a degree course is easier if your child has a clear idea of the subject they want to study – and easier still if they know what career they want. If they're not certain about these, take a look at our advice on choosing a career on page 6 and on picking a degree subject if you're not sure what career you want on targetcareers.co.uk (click on 'Careers advice' then 'Choices about uni').

Vocational degrees

If your child wants to take a vocational degree (ie one that is focused on a particular career), investigate the following.

- Is the course accredited by the 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).

Questions about any course

It's a good idea to find out the following about any degree course your child is considering, regardless of whether they have a career in mind.

- 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?

Researching universities

You and your child might also want to find out the following about universities that interest them.

- 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?

Pay a visit

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. 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 at 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. **1**

Sources of information

- University websites
- targetcareers.co.uk
- Course admissions tutors
- www.unistats.ac.uk
- www.ucas.com
- Professional bodies, eg ICAEW and CII
[The Chartered Insurance Institute].

Degrees and employment prospects: top five myths

Make sure your child has the full facts 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: Some graduate jobs require a particular subject or range of subjects (eg a numerate degree or a science degree) but few specifically call for non-vocational arts degrees such as English and history. However, 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.

Some employers also prefer to recruit from top-ranked universities. If your child wants to be a lawyer or management consultant, for example, a degree in French from, say, the University of Oxford or Imperial College London will impress more than a degree in law from a lower-ranked university.

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.



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. 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 Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR). The former predicted an average graduate starting salary of £30,000 for 2015, while in summer 2015 the AGR 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, AGR members offered 21,682 graduate jobs in 2013–14*, while around 300,000 graduates leave university each year, meaning that only around seven 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 2013 with an undergraduate degree and were in full-time jobs six months later earned an average of £20,000. **1**

*Source: AGR Winter Review 2015

How to choose a degree and apply successfully

Bob Athwal is director of student experience at the University of Leicester and previously worked in graduate recruitment. He talked to TARGETcareers about university applications.



Encourage your child to pick a subject they have a passion for. At university they'll be expected to be an independent learner and if they don't pick a subject that's going to ignite their enthusiasm they may struggle. It will also make it easier to articulate to admissions tutors why they're a standout applicant.

Once they've chosen a subject the most important factors are the quality of the department, the course content, the way the content is taught and the researchers who teach it. Are they the best in their field and will they inspire your child?

You can use course comparison sites to find out the grades required to get onto a course, how many undergraduates go on to further study or graduate employment, the student satisfaction levels and how the department is ranked. On the department's own website you can look at the academics who teach there, what their specialisms are and any awards they have won.

After shortlisting departments, look at these universities more widely. Do they have a strong careers offering and student wellbeing services? What are the student residences like?

Where is the campus located? Does the university look and feel like a good cultural fit for your child?

Use open days to get under the skin of a course – is it everything it says on the tin? Encourage your child to ask the questions. Part of the transition to university is about independence and independent learning.

Becoming an appealing applicant

If your child is involved in activities outside the classroom before they apply to university, they can talk about how they've grown as an individual through those experiences in their personal statement and at interview. If they've done part-time work or volunteering and have stuck with it, it means they're probably going to stick with their course through the rough times. If they're a self-taught musician, that suggests that they are inquisitive.

At university, they need to engage in extracurricular activities from day one. The curriculum alone won't give them all the skills required to get a job. Developing their outside interests before university will give them a head start in terms of knowing what they enjoy and building the skills to win a place in their desired team, cast or group. **T**



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A person's arm and hand are visible, holding a red book. The background is a blurred stone wall. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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targetcareers.co.uk

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 accountancy firms. Whichever route your child chooses, once they've started their job they'll work towards becoming professionally qualified as an accountant. You can read more about this at targetcareers.co.uk.

Starting work at 18

Accountancy firms usually seek good academic grades (eg 280 UCAS points) from applicants, with at least a B 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

A graduate can enter the accountancy profession with a 2.1 degree (the second highest grade) in almost any subject. 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 280 UCAS points), although things are changing. Many graduates seek internships in their penultimate year of study, as full-time offers are frequently made to interns who impress employers. 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 200 and 280 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 and corporate banking divisions first hire college leavers into a front-line role – at a local branch or within its call centre –

where they'll work for up to six months before being progressed onto the apprenticeship scheme. Other banks enrol college leavers into the training programme straight away.

Banking careers for graduates

For graduate programmes within retail and corporate banking, applicants typically need a 2.1 in any subject and 300 to 320 UCAS points. Most employers also have minimum GCSE (or equivalent) requirements; for example HSBC asks for a grade B 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 320 UCAS points. Most investment banks take on graduates into finance roles from all academic disciplines, but they tend to go for those from 'top universities'. A relevant internship is almost a must. **T**

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.

How to get into engineering

Explore paths into engineering and the grades required.

Would-be engineers who intend to complete their A levels 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 maths and physics; and some ask for all three. For some very prestigious universities it is helpful to also have further maths. See the extended version of this article at targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors for more details.

To get onto an engineering higher apprenticeship or similar your child will typically need maths and science A levels. Some employers ask for specific science subjects and others don't, but maths is often requested.

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 are typically a bit lower. Some employers don't specify grades; some ask for C grades or above at A level; others set a minimum number of

UCAS points, typically between 240 (CCC) and 280 (BBC) though sometimes higher.

The university route

Your child could study a particular area of 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 or one that leads to a masters-level qualification.

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.

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. **T**

More help from TARGETcareers

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors

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.

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 apprenticeship or sponsored degree (see page 10). Employers generally ask for two or three A levels (or equivalent). Some set minimum grades or UCAS points, typically between 200 and 300. 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 or psychology). 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 sponsored degrees and higher 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 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.

Many graduate roles (though not all) are open to those with any degree subject. 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.

Employers for graduate roles usually require a 2.1 degree, but do not tend to specify a subject. However, if your child's degree relates to the work that an employer does, that could give an advantage: a science graduate may appeal to a PR organisation that specialises in healthcare communications, for example.

Management consulting

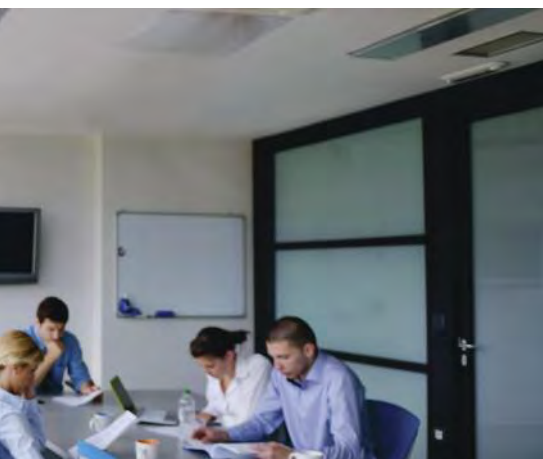
Some firms, often referred to as professional services firms, offer a range of services to clients, such as accountancy, tax and consulting; others specialise in consulting services. At the time of writing, none of the latter offer opportunities for school leavers. However, professional services firms 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 required by all 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. **1**

More help from TARGETcareers

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

- an extended version of this article
- salaries in business
- degree choices for business careers
- types of jobs and employers your child could choose.



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.

Uni first, job later

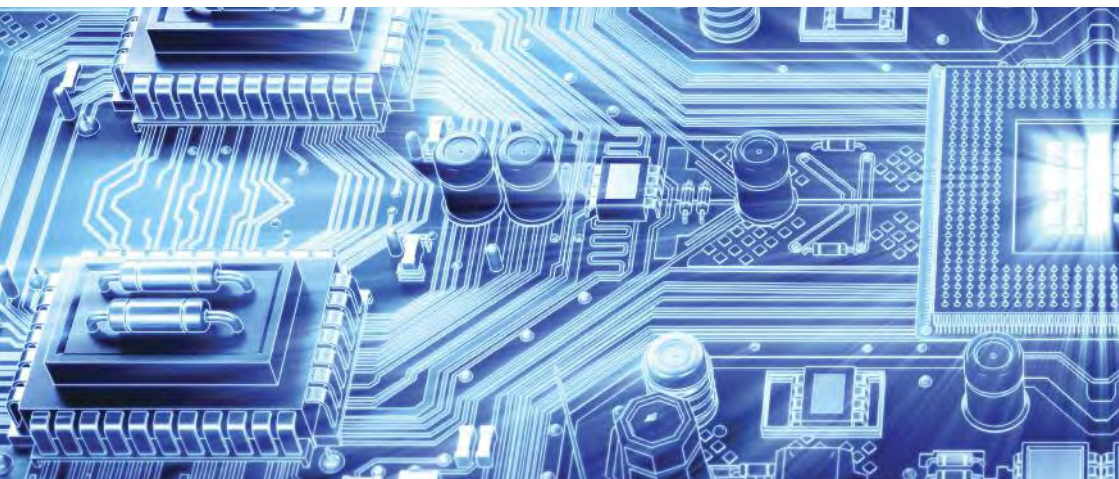
It's possible to get into an IT career as a graduate with any subject. However, broadly speaking, the less technical your child's degree the fewer roles will be open to them; as such they'll face more competition and need to be more impressive as a candidate.

- 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.
- Some 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

Sponsored degrees 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 10 for more detail on how such programmes work. Lower levels of apprenticeship are also available.

There are a handful of sponsored degree programmes that would enable your child to complete an IT degree 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. CGI and Capgemini both run sponsored

degrees; Ford has a similar programme though it calls it a higher apprenticeship.

Several other programmes 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 National Grid, Unilever and BAE Systems.

To get onto a programme that includes a sponsored degree or foundation degree your child will typically need three A levels (or equivalent). UCAS points requirements tend to vary between 240 (CCC) and 300 (BBB). Often their A levels need to include at least one or two science, maths or technology subjects. However, this isn't always the case – Unilever simply asks for a minimum of two A levels.

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. **i**

More help from TARGETcareers

Visit targetcareers.co.uk/career-sectors/ 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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A faster route to chartered accountant status

Flo Barrett is an assistant executive in audit and assurance on EY's school leaver programme.



A careers adviser suggested that an accountancy career might suit me. When an accountant visited my school to give a talk, I had a conversation with her that led to two days' work experience. I did basic jobs but I loved it. I then did work experience in the finance department at the telecoms company where my dad worked, to compare being an auditor to being a financial accountant. I also took part in ICAEW's BASE competition for schools and colleges.*

A curious mind

I applied for EY's school leaver programme and chose the audit and assurance option. This involves checking other organisations' accounts to ensure that they are not misleading and I knew from my work experience that it interested me. I have a curious mind and I like being able to investigate things. For example, we have to check that all the supporting documents for a set of accounts (eg the original invoices) are there.

Training and qualifications

The chance to get a professional qualification through ICAEW a year earlier than if I went

to university was appealing. I've already progressed to assistant executive, and in five years' time I'd like a management role – for which I'll need my ACA qualification. My training on the programme started with ICAEW's basic qualification, the certificate in finance, accounting and business (ICAEW CFAB). For each set of exams I spent two weeks at college or had two weeks off work for self study.

Working life

My job involves auditing government and public service organisations. I travel a lot, often staying in a hotel. In my first year I spent 80 per cent of my time away; now it's 35 per cent. I enjoy speaking to people so I like the face-to-face contact with clients. With some clients I'm the team leader, which involves checking that the rest of the team know what they're doing and keep an eye on work quality and timescales. I still have a social life; if I go to the pub on a weekday evening I often just have one drink and leave by 10.00 pm but this doesn't bother me. **T**

*For 16- to 19-year-olds, the competition gives a flavour of what it's like to work as a chartered accountant.



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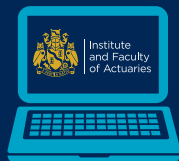
- **Communication** – like people?
- **Problem solving** – like a challenge?
- **Analytical** – good eye for detail?
- **Technical** – like the nitty gritty?
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Getting a helicopter view of a company

George Acquah is an internal audit manager at Rolls-Royce. He graduated from the University of Leicester with a degree in physics in 2008.



When I finished college I wasn't sure what I wanted to do so I took a few years out and worked as a musician before deciding to go to university. I'd enjoyed science at school and college and chose to study physics. After my degree I joined PwC's graduate scheme.

FTSE 100 clients

The scheme lasted three years and involved progressing through the ACA qualification to qualify as an ICAEW chartered accountant, which has been one of my career highlights. I worked at PwC for six years in total; my role was in audit, which involves checking other companies' financial records to ensure that the results they are reporting are true and fair. My clients included a number of FTSE 100 companies, which helped me to develop an understanding of how large organisations work. I also gained experience of managing a team.

Improving an organisation

I then joined Rolls-Royce as an internal audit manager. Internal audit involves making sure

that a business is being run in an efficient, legal manner without inappropriate levels of risk. I'm helping to improve the organisation from both financial and operational perspectives, for example looking at systems and processes as well as financial data. The brilliant thing is that I get a helicopter view of the company – how it all works and fits together.

Learning about jet engines

I'm able to apply the skills and experience that I gained at PwC as well as knowledge from university. For example, all new employees have to take a course on how a jet engine works; I was at a distinct advantage due to my physics degree. It's great to learn about the cutting edge that Rolls-Royce has developed to make sure it gains and retains a competitive advantage.

Classic cars and *Songs of Praise*

Maintaining work/life balance is a challenge; I plan as much in advance as possible. In my personal life I like to tinker with my classic cars and still enjoy playing the piano – including recently on *Songs of Praise*. **T**

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Why my daughter's decision was the right one

Eddie Barrett is Flo Barrett's dad (see profile on page 41). He talked to TARGETcareers about her decision to join a school leaver programme rather than going to university.



I joined the Army at 16 and did an HND while in service, then started a business career at 32; my wife Katie went to university in her 30s. I could see that the business world was the path Flo would take. She's very driven, applies herself to everything and is someone that people just like. At school she did lots of extracurricular activities, was chair of the Young Enterprise Group and got involved in ICAEW's schools' programme. Even after she left she went back to cox the rowing team at 8.00 am on Sunday mornings.

Time to chat

Flo and I had a long drive home every day when she was in sixth form. She used the time to 'unload' to me what she had found out about careers and school leaver programmes. I couldn't answer back much as I was driving, but when we got home her mum would have lots of questions. Katie was keen for Flo to go to university as she felt it would make her more employable; Flo was having none of it! She did make a UCAS application as a back-up to keep her mother happy but got the position at EY that she wanted.

Adapting to working life

I didn't realise that as an auditor she would be based at clients' offices. In her first year she would often spend the whole working week away from home and do a lot of driving. However, she adapted to it quickly and it was easy to talk to her on a daily basis, for example via FaceTime.

Flo has made new friends at work as well as keeping old ones. She stays in touch with friends from EY's residential training sessions via WhatsApp and LinkedIn and they discuss work issues with each other. She's even gone on holiday with a fellow school leaver. She doesn't do as much sport now but spends time visiting friends who live elsewhere.

Being promoted

Flo has been promoted each year above the level that you would expect for a school leaver: she's just turned 21 and is more senior than the 23/24-year-old graduates she works with. I'm proud of the fact that when we talk to each other now it's as equals and of the way she handles other people. It shows she's made the right decision. **T**

Why work fitted the bill better than uni

Joanna Boosey is a project manager at Lloyds Banking Group, where she previously completed a higher apprenticeship in project management.



I started a psychology degree but unfortunately university wasn't right for me; I didn't enjoy the lack of contact time and the subject didn't capture my attention. After a considerable amount of thought I decided to leave, which was the hardest decision I have ever had to make, but I chose to explore alternative options I could do instead.

Exploring apprenticeships

I went back to see my head of sixth form; she suggested I speak to a Connexions careers adviser. I knew that I wanted to work in London (I live in Essex) and what my strengths were: I enjoy leadership, I'm good at organising things and I'm a people person. The adviser told me about the range of apprenticeships available and took me through relevant websites. It just so happened that he picked a link at random and it was the advert for this apprenticeship. When I saw the job description it fitted the bill and I was confident I could do it.

The apprenticeship was a 22-month programme, working towards a level 4 diploma in project management. In the first year I spent two to three days each month at

Lloyds Banking Group's training centre in Solihull, learning in a classroom environment. I also had to put together written evidence that I was demonstrating the relevant skills in my job and sat two three-hour exams.

Delivering change

I was based in the group change management department, where I still work. We help other areas of the business to deliver change, for example introducing a new process. My current assignment is in commercial banking, helping to launch new products for our business clients. I'm tracking progress in Microsoft Project and making sure that we have terms and conditions, staff training and reference materials in place ready for launch.

I achieved my first promotion shortly after completing the apprenticeship. My salary is similar to that of friends who went to university and are now starting graduate jobs, and to colleagues beginning the graduate scheme here. Outside of work, I've been making an effort to explore what the capital has to offer – my favourite experience so far has been a silent disco at the top of the Shard. **1**

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Advertisers' index



| | |
|---|-----------------|
| CII | 8 |
| CITB | 44 |
| EY | 15 |
| Falmouth University..... | 47 |
| HSBC | IBC |
| ICAEW | OBC, IFC, 3, 14 |
| Inspiring Futures | 40 |
| Institute and Faculty of Actuaries..... | 42 |
| Lloyds Banking Group | 2 |
| PwC | 4 |
| University of Leicester | 29 |

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