

# Courses and qualifications



## What's on offer?

There are lots of different vocational courses and qualifications to choose from. Here's your guide to just some of the ones that may be on offer in your local area.

For information about the full range of courses on offer, talk to your careers co-ordinator, teacher or Connexions Personal Adviser, or visit [www.voced.co.uk](http://www.voced.co.uk) to find out more.

## Vocational GCSEs

As well as traditional school subjects like Maths, French and History, GCSEs are also offered in a number of vocational subjects. Vocational GCSEs are graded A\*-G, but most are Double Awards – a bit like Dual Science. That means they're worth the same as two single GCSE subjects.

Unlike traditional subjects, vocational GCSEs often include group projects, practical activities and visits to employers. They are usually assessed through coursework and provide a valuable insight into the world of work. Just a few of the vocational GCSEs you can choose from are Applied Art and Design, Applied Business, Health and Social Care and Leisure and Tourism.

## NVQs

If you want to get a recognised qualification related to a particular industry or sector, an NVQ could be for you!

NVQ stands for National Vocational Qualification. NVQs are available in a lot of vocational subjects, including Catering, Hairdressing and Engineering. You can study NVQs at work, college or as part of an Apprenticeship. They provide a general introduction to a specific area of work.

NVQs are 'competence-based' qualifications. This means they have been designed to include practical, work-related tasks which will help you develop the skills and knowledge you'll need to do a job effectively. Generally speaking, NVQs are more practical than GCSEs, but they do contain some theory. To get a full NVQ qualification you have to have some real-life experience in the workplace, so most NVQs include practical work experience.

There are over 1300 different NVQs to choose from. They are available in most industry sectors, including business and management, health and social care and construction and property.

## **BTECs and OCR Nationals**

Interested in learning more about a specific sector or industry? How about taking a BTEC or an OCR National?

BTECs and OCR Nationals are practical, work-related qualifications. They are available in a wide range of subjects and many are designed with the help of employers to equip you with the skills and knowledge they are looking for.

They offer a mix of theory and practice and can include an element of work experience. BTECs and OCR Nationals can take the form of, or be part of, a technical certificate, which is one of the key components of an Apprenticeship.

BTECs and OCR Nationals are available in a variety of subjects including Information Technology, Media, Science and Sport. They are usually studied full-time at college but sometimes at school or with another learning provider. You can also study a BTEC or OCR National part-time at college.

These qualifications are mainly taken by learners over 16, although some schools offer them to 14 to 16-year-olds alongside other qualifications like GCSEs or key skills.

## **Vocational A levels**

A levels are the equivalent of Level 3 qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework. They are usually studied as two-year courses by students who are over 16.

A number of vocational A levels were introduced in September 2005, replacing Vocational Certificates of Education (VCEs). Each A level focuses on a specific sector, for example travel and tourism or engineering.

Vocational A levels are available in around 80 different subjects including Applied Art and Design, Applied ICT, Engineering and Travel and Tourism.

## **Other Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs)**

You can also study a wide range of practical, work-related Certificates and Awards in subjects such as Animal Care, Construction, Motor Vehicle Repair and Catering.

## **Key Skills**

Key skills are relevant to both the world of work and education. Basic numeracy and literacy, including computer literacy and good communication skills, are amongst the key transferable skills required by employers. Wider key skills include improving your own learning and performance, working with others and problem solving.

## **Entry Level Qualifications**

These are the first recognised qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework. They cover a variety of areas, including academic and vocational subjects and life skills. Entry level qualifications provide an ideal grounding for GCSE, BTEC and NVQ qualifications. For some students they will be the most appropriate starting point to access other qualifications.

## **Specialised Diplomas**

Employers and teachers are working together to develop a new vocational qualification called a specialised Diploma. The first five specialised Diplomas will be available in 2008. For more information about what specialised Diplomas are and what they're worth, visit the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) website at [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

## **What next?**

To find out more about vocational qualifications, visit **[www.voced.co.uk](http://www.voced.co.uk)**. Use our online prospectuses to find a course in your area or talk to your school's careers co-ordinator, your teacher or your Connexions Personal Adviser to find out which vocational courses are available to you.