

# ?PATHWAYS

**How GCSEs  
set you up for  
your future**



# HOW GCSEs SET YOU UP FOR YOUR FUTURE



Welcome  
to Year 9!

This is an exciting time; you get to choose which subjects you wish to study further. Some subjects – such as English, maths, science, PE – will stay a core part of your timetable, but there are some **choices** that you can make for yourself.

There may also be **new** subjects for you to choose from, such as business or health & social care.

In Years 9 and 10  
you will study 'GCSEs'.

This stands for  
General Certificate of  
Secondary Education  
and these are a way  
of assessing your  
achievements from  
school.

GCSEs are an important  
milestone, because  
they also tell colleges  
and employers:

What level of  
further study or  
job responsibility  
is right for you.

What your  
skills and  
strengths are.

Some schools offer **vocational qualifications** alongside GCSEs. Vocational qualifications offer a mix of **practical** and **theoretical** learning that is directly related to a specific area of employment.



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## Grades and levels – what's the difference?

### GCSE grades

GCSEs are graded 1-9 and *universities will expect students to have achieved at least grade 4 in English and maths*. Depending on the course you are applying for, you may also need higher GCSE grades in science, maths or specific GCSE subjects.

You may need a minimum of four or five+ GCSEs graded 4 and above

### Qualification levels

GCSE is a 'level 2' qualification. You need 'level 3' qualification(s) to get into university. To progress onto level 3 (such as A levels or T levels):

Some further education colleges will ask for six 'good' GCSE passes

Some level 3 subjects may ask for more, e.g. a grade 6-7 in maths for chemistry A level or a grade 5 in English for some humanities A levels.



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## What about Ebacc?

Students often make four option choices (three if they take triple science) – you may be asked to select one or two 'Ebacc' subjects from the choices on offer.

## Why is this?

Modern foreign languages

Computer science

**Ebacc is *not* a qualification, but a combination of subjects that includes:**

**Humanities  
(such as history  
and geography)**

Higher ranked universities like to see a broad range of GCSE (Ebacc) subjects, and it has been shown that students following the Ebacc are more likely to stay – and achieve – in education.



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## GCSEs and planning for the future and university

If you have a particular passion, or career idea for the future, it may be wise to take a related subject, or your future pathway could be tricky.



**Art, languages, IT / computer science and triple science may be among the subjects needed for budding creatives, computer scientists, doctors, vets and dentists.**



This explains the greater emphasis on careers from Year 9. If you're unsure what subjects you may need for the future, and for help to decide if this is the best way to go, make sure you speak with your careers lead in school or ask for a careers guidance appointment to talk things through.



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## Starting to think about future career plans

Some students know from a young age what they want to do. It is not realistic – or perhaps even desirable – for everyone to choose a career in Year 9!

### Useful websites include:

[nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)  
– job profiles

[icould.com](https://icould.com)

[careersbox.co.uk](https://careersbox.co.uk)

[targetcareers.co.uk](https://targetcareers.co.uk)

Your school may also use a careers platform such as 'Start' or have a licence for 'Kudos'...?


It is, though, sensible for you to start to do some **research into different careers**, and the sorts of occupational areas you are drawn to. Using **careers websites** and other resources to research and reflect can help you understand in which direction you may be headed.

Careers quizzes, such as the '**buzz quiz**' on **icould.com**, or questions leading to **suggested careers 'matches'** on **Kudos** (if your school has a licence for this), can help you to understand your strengths and interests.

For more on this, see **Your strengths and interests, and how to make the right decisions for you**

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**Year 9  
roadmap  
– have I  
done these  
things?**

- 
- A black and white photograph of three male students in school uniforms, looking intently at a laptop screen. They are standing close together, and the student on the left is pointing at the screen.
- ☒ 1. Looked at information about jobs and careers that I might choose in the future
  - ☒ 2. Completed at least one careers quiz to get some insights
  - ☒ 3. Read options information given to me at school
  - ☒ 4. Checked which qualifications I need to allow me to reach my future goals
  - ☒ 5. Spoken with my careers team in school
  - ☒ 6. Spoken with my subject teachers
  - ☒ 7. Been to options events
  - ☒ 8. Spoken with my family

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## Pathways' partners:

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Loughborough  
University

connexions

Loughborough  
COLLEGE est. 1909

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