

ALTERNATIVES to UNIVERSITY

The Guide to School Leaver Programmes and
Apprenticeships for Students, Parents & Teachers



Welcome

Today's students are faced with a wider array of post-18 options than ever before and it is crucial that they are making informed decisions about their options.

It is important that school leaver programmes are not considered a second choice, less respectable than a degree course or for students who miss out on a university place. Since the sharp rise in tuition fees prestigious, global companies from a number of industries have been quick to create opportunities for sixth formers that provide salaries, intense training, employability skills, contacts and in some cases formal qualifications. Forward-thinking, savvy and career-minded students have jumped at the chance to kick-start their careers and bypass university and student debt to start earning now – a smart move given the global economic recession.

For many students university degrees, gap years, vocational courses or training will be their right pathway, but this booklet will point those sixth formers looking for alternatives to university in the right direction.

PURE POTENTIAL

future-talent.com launched in the summer of 2012 and is now one of the fastest growing online school and college leaver resources available. Since January 2013 we have visited well over 100 schools and colleges nationwide and our consistent interaction with teachers and careers advisors highlighted the need for this guide.

In their role supporting young people we found that they were seeking a “go to” resource that explains the options available in a way that was both easy to understand and convey. The Alternatives to University Guide aims to do just that and we hope that the information found in it will help young people not only find their first step on the career ladder but also in the years after they've found it.

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Contents

Welcome	1
A Respected Alternative	3
The Pros and Cons	5
The Options	6
How to support your student	7
EY school leaver profile	8
A Family Case Study	9
Milkround	11
The Application Process	13
CVs and Covering Letters	13
Application Forms	15
Competency Questions	16
Interviews	17
Online Tests	19
Assessment Centres	20
Careers	21
Qualifications in Accountancy	21
Accountancy Case Study	22
Accountancy Career Route Planner	23
Mazars	25
Grant Thornton + Case Study	27
BDO + Case Study	29
EY	31
PP: School Leavers Event	33
ICAEW's BASE Competition	34
CILEx	35
Apprenticeships	37
The Training Room	38
TfL	39
PERA	41
Fusion Training	43
PP Web	44

Why school leaver programmes are a respectable alternative

We are big fans of university – it can allow you to immerse yourself in a subject you enjoy for three years or more, participate in the usual university antics and leave with a qualification which is recognised around the world. You can probably work out that we are also huge fans of school leaver programmes too! They can offer you the chance to earn a competitive salary, gain excellent qualifications and get real life commercial experience.

There is no right or wrong choice, nor is one better than the other, but it's important to find the right fit for you. All we ask is that you consider both sides so you can make an informed decision about your future.

Before we go any further, it's important for us to dispel some common myths surrounding school leaver programmes...

MYTH 1

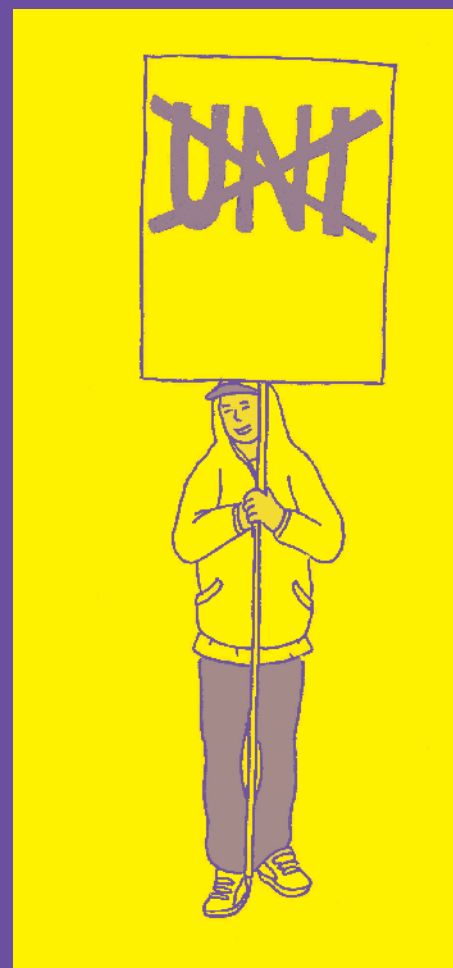
School leaver programmes aren't well-respected.

There are over 300 top employers who offer competitive programmes with many more joining the school leaver arena each year. With recent changes in higher education, employers predicted a decline in the number of students applying to university and decided to offer an attractive alternative for smart, ambitious students. The 'rise of the school leaver programme' has caused a shift in employment, and companies are quickly realising the talent, enthusiasm and fresh ideas younger students can bring to their organisations. They are investing time and money into hiring, training and developing their school leaver work force – this definitely would not be happening if employers did not consider school leaver programmes as a well-respected route. This shift in focus is causing a stir amongst students, parents and teachers – there are more students than ever before opting to go down the school leaver route and an increasing number of teachers and parents are supporting this move too.

MYTH 2

A university degree is your passport to employment whereas a school leaver programme can only get you so far.

There was once a time when you could waltz out of university with a degree and land yourself a first-class job. Unfortunately times have changed, and with thousands of graduates entering the job market each year, students are now required to go the extra mile (or two) to get a job when they leave university, and there are many who are still unemployed. The majority of school leaver employers offer reputable professional qualifications as part of their programme (including some employers who run sponsored degree programmes). These professional qualifications are widely recognised and can be your passport for working not just in the UK but around the globe! In some cases, you could even complete your qualification faster than if you were to go down the university route. You can also make excellent professional connections which will be valuable further down the line if you decided to move jobs.



MYTH 3

School leavers aren't paid well.

The vast majority of school leaver providers pay their school leavers a competitive salary and they cover the cost of all training and any qualifications they gain, which can be very expensive! Salaries usually increase as you progress through the programme and take on more responsibilities which means you will have more money to spend or to put towards buying your first home.

MYTH 4

School leavers miss out on the social life that university provides.

Without doubt, university is a lot of fun – you spend three years having a great time, making friends and develop a lot of life skills. Employers recognise that students are giving up three years of socialising and more, which is why they often have a dedicated team that looks after social activities for new starters. They will organise away days, team building retreats and regular social events to give you a chance to meet new people, make friends and build that all-important social network.

PROS

Gain a professional qualification

Earn a competitive salary

Get first-hand, real experience with professionals

No student debt

Many graduates are leaving university and struggling to find a job

Go onto higher education later in life

There is less competition for places at school-leaver level than graduate level

Be independent, not reliant on loans

Some companies offer the chance to try different areas of the business

Receive extensive training by leading professionals in a structured programme

Some companies offer students the chance to study part-time at university and gain a degree alongside working

CONS

University gives the opportunity to study a chosen subject in great detail

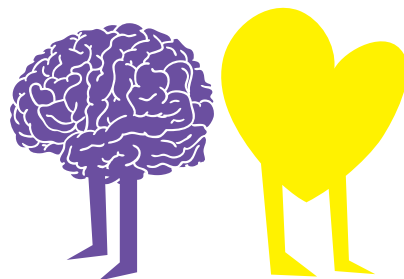
University provides students with more time to consider their career options

Sample a variety of career options through work placements

There will be more opportunity for socialising

At university there are considerably longer holidays

Societies and clubs develop extra-curricular interests such as theatre, sport etc. at university



What are the options?

The difference between the following programmes and just getting an ordinary job is that there won't be the training schedule, qualifications to be gained or progression infrastructure in the same way. These programmes are a launch pad into an advanced career level, which is why they are so sought after! Here is a brief guide to each type, but check each company's specifications because they will vary enormously:

SCHOOL LEAVER PROGRAMMES

A school leaver programme is a fixed-term, paid job available to students after sixth form which provides an intensive, structured training programme and in some cases formal professional qualifications.

SPONSORED DEGREES

Corporate firms are sponsoring some degree courses which offer a direct route into a graduate job via university. The firm pays for the degree course on the condition that the student works for them during their holidays and after they graduate for a fixed period. These programmes are perfect for students who want to combine work and study, and who are willing to forego their summer holidays. Students should be aware that in some cases they may not be eligible for loans or grants from the government.

APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship is usually referred to as a job in a vocational industry where young people can train while they earn money from the age of 16 in careers as diverse as nursing, engineering, finance and carpentry. Confusingly, some professional school leaver programmes are also known as apprenticeships!

HIGHER APPRENTICESHIPS

These are paid apprenticeships that give you the chance to progress academically to degree level (such as NVQ levels 4&5, Foundation Degrees, HNCs or HNDs) through practical work experience.

How to support your student

Your student is bright, talented and full of ambition. No doubt as a teacher, parent or carer you will want to support them as they make crucial decisions for their future but the school leaver market is relatively new and you may have concerns or hesitations if your child is interested in this path.

Whatever your student goes on to do it is important that you are involved in the decision-making process and are able to offer informed guidance, and discuss their options fully.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Why have you decided to apply for a school leaver programme?

Why don't you want to go to university?

Have you considered the pros and cons for each, and are you happy to accept the cons?

What research have you done on the type of programmes out there?

Which particular programmes or companies have you researched?

Have you looked into the application process? What is involved?

What are your long term career prospects? How does your career path compare to the university route?

Have you spoken to any school leavers? What do they think of their chosen path?

WHY I CHOSE THE EY SCHOOL LEAVER PROGRAMME.

Drew Williams, Queen Elizabeth School, Barnet

I knew even at school that I wanted to go into financial services, as I'd done some work experience at an investment bank and really enjoyed it. I discussed with colleagues there the pros and cons of going straight into work, and decided to join the EY School Leaver programme in 2012. Most of my friends respected my decision not to go to uni, especially when you consider the financial benefits of going straight into work.

Since starting at EY I have gained an appreciation of just how respected the ACA qualification is. It's so transferable, and with the other skills I've learned, it will stand me in good stead for my whole career. But the thing I've most enjoyed about EY is the people. They are always friendly and willing to help, which is reassuring when you're joining such a big global firm straight from school.

If you have any questions about the #EYSchoolLeaver you can tweet Drew at @DrewWilliams_EY or find out more at ukcareerguide.ey.com

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EY
Building a better
working world

A family story

Sueli and her daughter Gabbi live in London. Last year, Gabbi decided to apply for a school leaver programme at leading firm EY. Here is their story:

Sueli

When did you first hear about school leaver programmes?

I first heard about the EY school leaver programme a couple of years ago when my daughter mentioned it after a careers event she had attended. This was the first I'd heard of such a programme, and it was all very new to me.

Were you sceptical about them as an alternative to university for your daughter?

At first I was quite sceptical about the programme as I had always hoped for Gabriella to go to university and achieve a respectable degree. However I understand that now-a-days even a great degree can sometimes not secure you a job. The bottom line is that young people go to university in the hope to secure a job at the end of it - my daughter has fast-tracked this route. The school leaver programme

has allowed her to secure a fantastic job at a global firm with no university debt worries, or concerns about finding a job. The structure of the programme is great as she is gaining experience and a qualification at the same time. She will qualify as a chartered accountant just as you would with a degree except a year earlier which really adds value.

How did you and your daughter weigh up the pros and cons of university vs the EY programme?

Both my husband and I spent time with Gabriella comparing the different routes available to reach my daughter's desired career path. We also went to some career meetings at her Sixth Form to inform ourselves further. It wasn't long before we realised that on a school leaver programme our daughter would become chartered a year earlier than if she chose a graduate path, and would also have 3 years work experience at such a young age compared to peers. Gabriella was planning to study finance and accounting at university anyway and so this path was a fast-track route to employment and becoming chartered.

What advice would you give any parents reading this who may have doubts?

I would advise parents to inform themselves on the different options available to your child. Times are changing and many young people have found it

extremely challenging to find employment even with the great degrees they have. Encourage your children to speak about what career path they envisage for themselves and help them to compare all options. As parents we want the best for our children, and on the school leaver programme, I am assured that in 4 years my daughter will be a chartered accountant with great work experience and a fantastic career ahead of her. This opportunity was not to be missed for our daughter, and this could apply to your child too.

Gabbi

Why did you choose a school leaver programme over university?

I always knew I wanted to work for a global accountancy firm. I was initially going to go to university to study finance and accounting, but when I heard about the EY school leaver programme I knew it was the best option for me. By choosing the school leaver route, I've been given the opportunity to kick-start my career by qualifying a year earlier than I would on a graduate scheme. School leavers at EY will study for 5 years to become chartered, whereas a graduate will incur 6 years of study (including university) to reach this level. I will have 3 years' experience of working at a multinational 'Big Four' firm by the time my peers will start employment, which is amazing. Overall, I have a secure job, a healthy salary, no student debt, and a promising career ahead of me.

What are you looking forward to most about the programme?

My short term goals are to complete the 5 years of work to qualify. I'm really looking forward to becoming chartered as once I've done this I can take my career one step further. I've met many partners at EY who are school leavers themselves and I definitely aspire to lead a similar career path to them. I'm also very much looking forward to meeting the new school leaver intake who are joining this year so I can share my experiences with them.

Do you have any advice for sixth formers who are currently making their choice?

This is a huge life decision, and my advice would be to do your research on all the different routes available to you. Spend time to compare and contrast the routes you're interested in. I wouldn't say that the school leaver programme is the best choice for everyone but I would definitely take it into consideration. Since joining the firm I've noticed that everyone in the firm is extremely supportive of the programme. Each school leaver gets their own mentor, counsellor, and buddy. I have received a lot of support and guidance and definitely have not felt thrown in the deep end at all. Some people may be worried that they will be missing out on the university lifestyle - but I can assure you that there is no lack of socialising on the EY school leaver programme at all! If you already know the sector you want to work in then this is an amazing opportunity to fast-track your career. Since the day I made my decision, I haven't looked back.

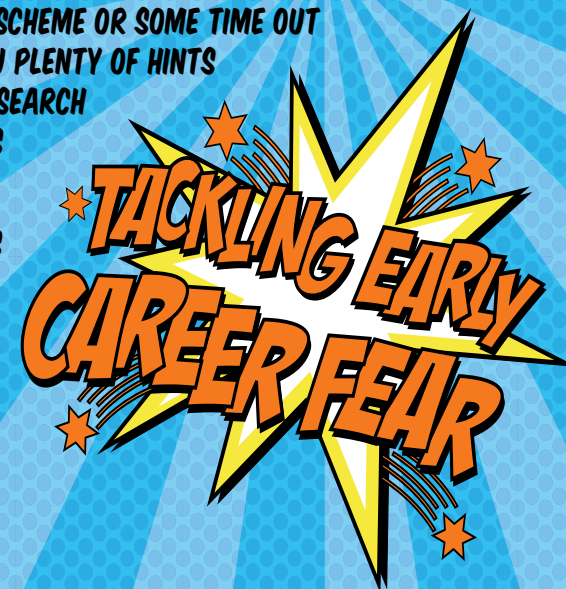
**I'VE FINISHED SCHOOL. NOW WHAT?
LOOK FOR A SCHOOL LEAVER SCHEME,
APPRENTICESHIP OR GO TO UNIVERSITY?**



DON'T FEAR YOUR CAREER, TAKE YOUR FIRST STEPS WITH THE CONFIDENCE MILKROUND CAN GIVE YOU. THERE ARE PLENTY OF OPTIONS OPEN TO YOU AFTER SCHOOL, AND WE'LL PROVIDE ALL THE ADVICE AND GUIDANCE YOU COULD NEED.

WHETHER YOU'RE CONSIDERING AN APPRENTICESHIP, INTERNSHIP OR PLACEMENT, A STRAIGHT TO WORK SCHEME OR SOME TIME OUT TO VOLUNTEER, OUR SITE WILL GIVE YOU PLENTY OF HINTS AND TIPS, AS WELL AS THE CHANCE TO SEARCH AND BROWSE LOADS OF OPPORTUNITIES WITH POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS.

OUR INDUSTRY HUBS ALSO HAVE GUIDES AND VIDEO INSIGHTS TO HELP YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOU. SO MAKE SURE YOU VISIT US TODAY ON THE WEB, TWITTER, FACEBOOK OR LINKEDIN.



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THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Employers are exceptionally good at making candidates jump through hoops to secure a job. Irrespective of the type of school leaver programme you are applying for, employers are looking for candidates who submit quality applications and perform exceptionally well during interviews and on assessment days. We have summarised the various stages in the application process that an employer might use.

CV

We like to think of a CV as a personal marketing document – it offers employers a snapshot of who you are and sells your strengths, achievements and any relevant work experience you've gained. A concise CV is extremely important when it comes to making a positive first impression - never let your CV expand beyond two sides of A4, preferably one side.

A CV should have the following:

PERSONAL DETAILS

Include your name, address, contact number and email. Don't include a photo!

EDUCATION

Organise these in reverse chronological order

WORK EXPERIENCE

Start with your most recent job and work backwards. Prioritise those that are most relevant, and give brief bullet points to outline what you did.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mention any voluntary work you do, awards you have won, or positions of responsibility you hold.

OTHER

Include IT skills, sports, languages and hobbies.

REFERENCES

Give the name and contact details of two referees or state that they are "Available on request". Contact your referees in advance to check that they are happy to provide a reference, send them your CV and give them some basic information about the job.

When it comes to the style of a CV, remember to use an easy to read font and size, use subheadings and bullet points where relevant and don't forget to add spaces between each section; you should be aiming to format it to a professional standard.

Covering Letters

You will need to send a one page letter, or in some cases an email, with your CV called the covering letter. This is where you can discuss the skills and achievements most relevant to the position you are applying for in more detail. The covering letter, like your CV is a very important document and will usually be the first thing a potential employer will read, so it must be unique to that company.

THE PLANNING & RESEARCH STAGE

Read the job description carefully and find out what they are looking for in their ideal candidate. Highlight which aspects of the job you feel or know you are capable of doing and the aspects that appeal to you. Look at the skills required and highlight which of those you have gained from past work experience or your education.

STRUCTURE

Introduction

State which position you are applying for, where you saw the vacancy and briefly explain your current circumstances.

How do your skills and personal attributes suit this role?

Discuss how you became interested in the industry and support your points with past work experience, knowledge you've gained from your sixth form qualifications, or extracurricular activities which have sparked your interest.

Why have I chosen to apply to this particular company?

Discuss aspects of the company that you find particularly inspiring. Show that you have researched the firm and the sector. You need to be able to say why you have been inspired by what the company has done and why you want to be a part of it.

SIGNING OFF

A weak, half-hearted ending to a cover letter can leave the employer wondering whether you really want the job, so make sure you sound enthusiastic and super keen. The final paragraph should include a word of thanks and how you're looking forward to hearing from them.



Application forms

The application form will ask you to give much of the same information as on a CV such as your name, address, your school and grades and employment history. The most important thing with the basic questions is to ensure there are no errors whatsoever.

Companies may also ask you to answer a number of questions such as “describe a time when you have worked as part of a team”. Known as competency questions, there is no clear right or wrong response, but here are some important things you should consider before you tackle this part of the form:

Match up

Your answer should match the nature of the job on offer. Try to structure your response in a format appropriate to the industry or job.

Key skills

Focus on the key skills and qualities the employer is looking for. Have a look at the company website for buzzwords used to describe their employees.

Examples

Use an example to demonstrate your skills and qualities. Employers are looking for the perfect candidate – you need to show them how great you are using evidence.

Not sure where to start or how to structure your answer?

The **STAR** model is an excellent framework which we recommend to help structure your answers:

SITUATION:

Open with a brief description of the situation and context of the story (who, what, where, when, how).

TASK:

Explain the task you had to complete highlighting any specific challenges or constraints (e.g. deadlines, costs, other issues).

ACTION:

Describe the specific actions that you took to complete the task. These should highlight desirable traits without needing to state them (initiative, intelligence, dedication, leadership, understanding, etc.).

RESULT:

Close with the result of your efforts and include figures to quantify the result if possible. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, what new skills have you learnt from the experience that you can apply to the role you are applying for?

Common Competency Questions

DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU SOLVED A PROBLEM

HAVE YOU EVER INFLUENCED SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING OR CHANGED THEIR MIND?

TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU FAILED TO COMPLETE A TASK OR PROJECT ON TIME, DESPITE INTENDING TO DO SO.

GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF WHEN YOU'VE EXCELLED YOURSELF AT WORK IN THE PAST.

DESCRIBE A SITUATION WHERE YOU HAD TO EXPLAIN SOMETHING COMPLEX TO A COLLEAGUE OR A CLIENT. WHICH PROBLEMS DID YOU ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH THEM?

Interviews

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Usually conducted by the HR or graduate recruitment team, the telephone interview is just as important for employers as a face-to-face interview. There are several things to consider when it comes to telephone interviews:

Location.

Most employers will contact you to fix a time and date that's suitable for you. Pick a slot where you will be at home, it will be quiet and you won't be disturbed by others.

Frame of mind.

Dress up as you might for a normal interview, and sit at a desk with a notepad and pen, so you look and feel the part.

Tone of voice.

Employers are looking for candidates who are enthusiastic so remember to use positive language, vary your pitch and smile while you speak.

Equipment.

Some employers will ask you to do a video or Skype call. Check the login details, picture and sound quality and make sure you've charged your mobile phone / laptop.

Preparation.

Read your CV, covering letter and application form thoroughly and have a copy of the job description to hand. Refresh your memory by visiting the company's website and weave some of this knowledge into your answers.

PARTNER INTERVIEW

A senior member of staff may interview you in the second or third round. Don't let their position in the company intimidate you!

The Partner.

Research the person who will be conducting your interview using LinkedIn or the company website to ensure you come across as someone who is interested and willing to go the extra mile to make yourself stand out.

Conversation.

There are often no set questions in this style of interview, but partners will be looking for evidence of commercial awareness so demonstrate your knowledge in your answers through examples.

First impressions.

Your initial interaction with the partner will set the tone for the rest of the interview, so practice your handshake, keep it really friendly and let your enthusiasm shine through from the outset.

Follow-up questions.

Come up with a list of questions to ask the partner, but be sure that these are specific to the role, company or them. Maybe ask how they got into the industry, what they enjoy the most about their work, etc.

PANEL INTERVIEW

The panel interview gives employers the chance to invite several members of their company to grill you, and there are some simple techniques which you can use to improve your performance:

Homework.

Similar to the partner interview, you should research each panel member and have an understanding of their background and what they do at the firm. Based on their position in the firm, it is likely that they will ask you about their area of expertise so it's worth coming up with a list of potential questions and answers in advance.

Rapport.

Building rapport with more than one person in an interview setting can be tricky, but there will be some small talk at the start so use this time to chat informally and confidently with panel members.

Eye contact.

Direct your answer to the panel member who asked the question, but look over at the other panel members throughout your answer too.

Ending the interview.

Most of us probably feel the need to run out of an interview as soon as the final question has been asked, but you should ask some questions of your own at the end. Feel free to target your questions to particular members of the panel and ask a generic question for anyone on the panel to answer too. The interviewers are giving up their time to attend the interview, so remember to shake hands with each member and thank them.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST WEAKNESS?

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR THIS COMPANY?

WHAT APPEALS TO YOU ABOUT THE ROLE?

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU THINK OUR COMPANY FACES?

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE, INSTEAD OF OUR COMPETITOR?

Online Tests

It has become standard practice for candidates to sit an online test. This is an additional filtering process to help employers select candidates to progress to the next stage. They can comprise of the following sections:

NUMERICAL REASONING

This is one of the more popular tests used by employers, especially if you're applying for a financial role such as tax, audit or consultancy. They certainly don't expect you to remember your entire Maths GCSE textbook, but they want to see that you can solve basic mathematical problems and interpret data in graphs, charts and tables.

VERBAL REASONING

Employers are testing your ability to interpret text here. You will most likely be given a paragraph or extract where you will have to identify and extract key bits of information. You can't revise for this test as it's not really about what you already know, but about demonstrating your ability to interpret information. You can however do plenty of online practice questions to improve your technique and speed.

INDUCTIVE REASONING

This one is all about shapes and patterns. It will probably seem really abstract at first, but inductive tests assess your ability to problem solve and think logically. You are usually shown a series of patterns and

you will have to work out the next pattern or shape. Mainly used when applying for a technical or financial role, practice definitely improves performance for this one.

HOW TO ACE ONLINE TESTS

Move on.

It's can be easy to get stuck and caught up on answering a particular question, but if you can't answer it, make an educated guess and move on. You can always come back to it if you have time later on.

Time keeping.

Keep a watch on the table so you can keep an eye on how long you've got. It's all about finding a good pace and this will definitely come with the more practice you do.

It's all in the detail.

There are plenty of times when candidates have rushed and misinterpreted the question. Read the question carefully and check your answer before you move on.

Feedback.

Some companies will offer you feedback and this will help you to work out your strengths and weaknesses, which will be useful for future tests. Email the HR team to request feedback.

Assessment Centres

Written by Future Talent

Employers use assessment centres to get an impression of how candidates will perform in simulated circumstances designed to replicate aspects of the real job, and to gain a clearer picture of the sorts of qualities which are also tested in interview. Placing you directly alongside your competitors allows your assessors to see how you perform in comparison with your peers.

We've seen enough to know the pitfalls and traps that employers might lay and have provided you with five tips for how to avoid them, and most of all how to shine throughout the day:

Preparation.

The format of an assessment day can vary from one employer to the next, but common elements do still exist. Among the kinds of tasks most frequently set are group exercises where candidates are divided into teams and asked to work on a problem, deliver a presentation and answer questions from a panel. This part of the day is very difficult to prepare for but it's definitely worth thinking about how you come across in a group, ways you can demonstrate your best traits, and remember to brush up on your presentation skills. Most assessment days also include a partner or panel interview. Preparing for this part of the day is crucial if you want to do well. Read the section on interviews for more advice.

Dresscode .

You need to be dressed smartly but comfortably. Assessment days usually last for the full day so you need to look the part but last the whole day too!

Logistics.

You should plan your journey well in advance and leave plenty of time just in case there are delays. Take a notepad and pen with you so you can make notes during the talks and group exercises, and bring a copy of your CV and covering letter so you can refresh your mind before you go.

Skills.

Employers are looking for people who demonstrate a range of "ideal skills". You must articulate and demonstrate your best skills throughout the day. There will be a group exercise during the day and you will be expected to contribute. Some candidates will naturally take the lead, if you're not in a position to do so, that's fine. Just be sure to contribute confidently to the group and communicate your thoughts with clear purpose and insight. Whether you're the group leader or not, be a good listener, include those who haven't yet spoken and be willing to compromise.

Personality.

Through all the trials and tribulations of the day, employers will be watching your every move which can be nerve-racking. Just remember that you've been asked to attend because they see potential in you so let your personality shine through in the various tasks. If you fulfil the criteria and you've got a great personality to match, it will be really hard for them to turn you down.

One final note, assessment centres are comprised of various mini activities, so if you mess up in one part, don't feel disheartened as the employers will be looking at all aspects of the application process when making their decision.

School leaver qualifications in accountancy

There are a number of ICAEW chartered accountancy school leaver programmes available, which you can start straight after completing your A Levels (or equivalent). It is common that most employers will ask you to start your professional training with another qualification first like the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) or the Certification points gained from an A Level in General Studies in Finance, Accountancy and Business (CFAB) or the Higher Apprenticeship in Assurance/Audit.

Your grades

The grades you have achieved so far are going to shape your future career. The good news is that while your grades are important, less emphasis is put on the actual subjects. That's why we tell you that you don't need A-level maths to be an ICAEW Chartered Accountant. Each employer has their own idea about their ideal candidate but here is some guidance.

GCSEs

You will need to have at least three A* - C grades in your GCSEs. Some employers may look for five A* - C and most employers will look for an A or B in maths and English.

A-Levels

You will need to have at least two A-level passes or equivalent. Most employers look for between 240 and 320 UCAS points and most will not recognise the points gained from an A-level in General Studies.



Case study



Rosanna, ACA Student

Accounts Assistant,
Calcutt-Matthews, Ashford

My view of accountancy was very limited before I looked into the ACA qualification, but once I did, the breadth of the qualification really impressed me. As I carry on with my studies, I'm realising more and more how much the ACA prepares you for a huge range of jobs and provides so many skills. I have also realised that accountancy is not just limited to number crunching and spreadsheets!

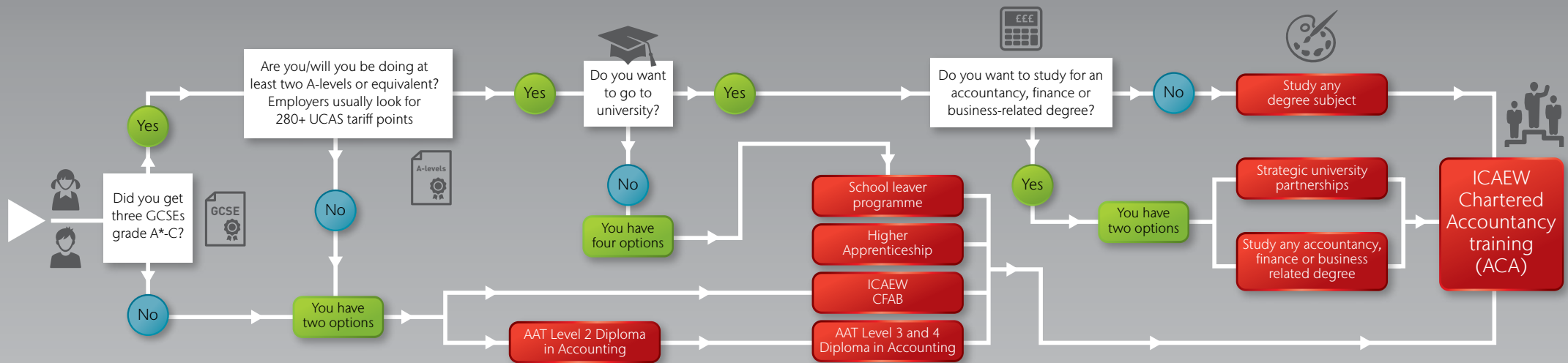
I didn't always want a career in accountancy but as I neared the end of my sixth form studies and began thinking about my future, the opportunities provided by the ICAEW became more and more appealing. I had done work experience at a firm of chartered accountants and that first got me interested in the career.

Though the learning aspect of university was very appealing, the huge debts associated with it were highly off-putting. After getting strong results at school I knew I wanted to continue learning and developing, but I also wanted to get practical experience. The ACA qualification from ICAEW seemed to be the perfect combination of working, earning and studying.

Because I am training with a small firm, I get to experience lots of different aspects of accountancy, compared to a trainee with a larger firm who might be limited to one department or area. I assist my manager and partner with accounts preparation and also gain audit experience. I also visit clients and get involved in helping them to progress and grow their businesses. Another aspect of my work is assisting the internal accounts department here at Calcutt-Matthews, so that I get a well-rounded view of every area of accountancy work.

For any school leavers wondering what to do, I would say don't assume that university is the only option for progression. There are firms offering this opportunity to those of us without degrees. If you are focused, determined and willing to put in the time and effort to succeed, then the ACA is the premium qualification to choose. It allows you to gain essential practical experience, as well as technical knowledge, all whilst earning a competitive salary.

Chartered accountancy career route planner



Your six step guide to becoming an ICAEW Chartered Accountant

1

Choose how you're going to get there

The good news is there's more than one route to becoming a chartered accountant. If you're bright, ambitious and want to get your career off the ground now, school leaver, apprenticeship, ICAEW CFAB and AAT-ACA Fast Track programmes offer an exciting alternative to university.

If you've decided university is your next step, our strategic degree programmes combine relevant work placements with your degree. If you don't want to study for an accountancy, finance or business-related degree, don't worry. Whichever course you do at university will stand you in good stead for a career as a chartered accountant.

Use our route planner to help you find the route that's right for you. For more information on these routes visit icaew.com/entryroutes

2

Find an employer to support you

ACA training is done on the job, so you get the opportunity to learn while in employment. But you don't have to wait until you have a training agreement – you can start while you are studying, or while you look for an employer.

If you are ready to start your journey, our Training Vacancies job portal can help you find an employer, visit icaewtrainingvacancies.com. Register your details, sign up for job alerts, upload your CV and search through a selection of employers around the world who promote their ACA vacancies through this service.

3

The application process

Employers look for the best candidates to recruit, so they will consider your academic abilities, willingness to learn, commitment, motivation and a desire to work in the profession. They'll also look at your employability skills such as team working, oral and written communication, problem-solving and commercial awareness.

Application processes vary depending on the employer; most will start with your CV or application form. To put yourself in the strongest position, make sure your CV is up to date and includes everything a potential employer will be looking for. Include relevant work experience, as well as examples from school activities or voluntary work – anywhere you have demonstrated any of the above skills. It all counts!

4

Show you're employable

Success in securing an ACA training vacancy is about proving you have the skills the employer is looking for. You'll have to demonstrate this throughout the recruitment process, by giving examples of how you have used these skills in real life. Work experience placements, insight days and summer schools are all great ways of developing the skills you need.

A whole section of our website is dedicated to employability. It has lots of useful hints and tips about CV writing and about the application process. There is also a selection of useful webinars from experts explaining how you can build and develop the skills you need to secure an ACA training agreement. Visit our careers website or our dedicated employability area at icaew.com/employability

5

Complete your chartered accountancy training

Through the ACA qualification, you will develop the knowledge, skills and experience you need to have a successful career as an ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

To find out more about the integrated components of ACA training and what support you will receive from your employer during your training agreement, visit icaew.com/careers. Our careers and salary section has more stories from our ACA students and ICAEW members who talk about what ACA training is like for them and the benefits the ACA qualification has brought to their career.

6

Become an ICAEW Chartered Accountant

When you have successfully completed the ACA qualification you'll be at the start of an exciting journey. You will have achieved one of the most advanced learning and professional development programmes available and be a highly qualified professional.

You'll be invited to become an ICAEW member and can use the internationally recognised letters ACA after your name. We'll support you throughout your career, give you access to a range of events, technical and career related support, not to mention access to a global network of chartered accountants!

MAZARS SCHOOL LEAVER TRAINING SCHEMES

Make all the difference

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE ALTERNATIVE?

If you are due to finish school or have already done so, you will be considering your options for the future and might be weighing up the pros and cons of further education. Have you considered the alternative to University?

Mazars can offer you an exciting head start by joining one of our trainee schemes for school or college leavers.

WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Mazars is an international, integrated and independent firm with over 13,500 people in over 70 countries delivering client service across market sectors and across the world, a career with Mazars means always having new things to learn as you work to achieve your highest ambitions. Mazars specialise in Audit, Tax, Financial Advisory, Consulting and Outsourcing Services across a range of markets and sectors.

Our work is at the heart of our business, and our purpose is to make the difference, to help our clients achieve success by providing the very best advice and support.

We not only make a difference for our clients, we can also make a difference for our staff. We work across a broad range of sectors, including banking and insurance, public sector and charity, and we work throughout the UK and on international assignments too. From the first day you arrive at Mazars, you will be welcomed with rewarding work, an excellent client list and supportive colleagues - all the crucial ingredients you need to inspire and educate you as you study for your qualification. We offer a diverse range of client services, so there are plenty of routes your career can take. Whichever path you decide is right for you - we'll be on your side.



MAZARS IN THE UK

12,500 EMPLOYEES

120 PARTNERS

IN 2012, OUR UK FEE INCOME WAS £115.3M

THE EIGHTH LARGEST UK PARTNERSHIP BY AUDIT FEE

IN 2012, OUR GLOBAL FEE INCOME WAS €1,013m

18 OFFICES

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN WITH WORK-BASED TRAINING



Not sure uni is for you – but want a career with real prospects that you can start right now? Meet Tom Johnson, 19, a trainee auditor working at the global accountancy firm Mazars

Did you always want to do auditing?

"Sort of, yes! Both my uncles were businessmen running their own businesses and I always found what they did absolutely fascinating. It also made me want to start earning money as soon as possible – so I started working part-time when I was 14. While I was still at school I also completed two work experience placements at accountancy firms, and by the end of the second placement I knew for sure that I wanted to be an accountant – the sooner the better!"

What do you do?

"My job title is 'corporate assistant' and I work in the insurance audit sector at Mazars. This means I work with different insurance companies, carrying out audits on their finances – so checking all the accounts are correct and as they should be. The work varies hugely, depending on the size of the company that I'm auditing. This makes it very interesting and also very challenging – which I love. For every job I am supervised by a senior colleague who answers any questions I have."

Best bits?

"Probably the fact that I work with such high profile clients – I get to see how different areas of massive companies work. I also love the fact that when it's not busy in the audit department, I can work in other areas of the company. In the past year I've worked with the corporate finance, tax, financial planning and insolvency teams. This has really helped to expand my accounting knowledge – and means that if I ever decide to leave the audit sector I'll have some good experience in other areas."

Did you go to university?

"No, I didn't. After my A-levels – I studied geography, business and sport – I decided university wasn't for me. I knew I wanted to do take the AAT [Association of Accounting Technicians] school-leaver route into accounting instead. AAT is a training qualification where you earn while you learn – a bit like an apprenticeship. You get to see how the financial side of a business works as well as other areas like marketing and inventory. I loved it."

Top tips for applications?

"Most accountancy firms recruit once a year so make sure you get your application in as soon as possible. If you're in your last year of sixth form or college, then start applying before Christmas for the following September's intake. That way you've got time to look for other positions if you're unsuccessful with your applications."

Any interview advice?

"Once you get an interview – prepare fully! Practise the questions you're likely to be asked, with your friends and family. Research the role and the company – look at how many offices they have nationally and globally, how many people they employ, what services they offer their clients. Always come armed with questions too. You need to show that you are interested and enthusiastic about joining the firm."

www.graduates.mazars.co.uk/school-leavers



TRY TO AVOID THE SNOOZE BUTTON IN THE MORNING

Accelerate with Grant Thornton

Whether you're joining us straight from school or from university, our industry leading trainee programmes in Audit and Tax provide the experience, skills and business knowledge you need to become a trusted adviser.

Quite simply, as a school leaver, our Accelerate programme gives you the opportunity to move into and develop an exciting and challenging career in accountancy.

We want to stretch your potential, which means you'll be doing real work from the outset with clients in a wide range of sectors. And alongside this, you'll get all the structured training and support you need to become professionally qualified.

In the first few years you'll study towards either the AAT or ACCA in audit or ATT or ACCA in tax (depending on the office that you join). With commitment and hard work you could be fully qualified within five years, a year ahead of people who choose to go to university.

You'll also spend intensive time at our dedicated training facility, Bradenham Manor in Buckinghamshire, to develop your technical knowledge and business skills, consolidate your learning and meet other trainees in a relaxed atmosphere. Plus, you'll earn a competitive salary while you train and study, and enjoy an excellent benefits package too – from private medical cover to things like subsidised gym memberships.



Our people get all the security and amazing opportunities you'd find in a large firm, coupled with a supportive, friendly office environment and great prospects, regardless of which programme you join us on. It's what fast-track careers at the heart of business are made of.

Case Study

ACCOUNTANCY

Beoley is an Audit Accelerate Trainee at Grant Thornton Liverpool Office

What's it been like?

I've recently completed my AAT and will shortly begin studying for my ACA qualification. I'm really enjoying my time at Grant Thornton. And along with the audit work in the Liverpool office, I've been given the chance to travel to different locations around the country and build a great network with others on the programme. People at Grant Thornton are supportive, and as school leavers we are given the best start to our career. It definitely doesn't stop once you are qualified either. There are always opportunities to grow and further your career.

So, how did it all begin?

I joined Grant Thornton two years ago straight from school after completing my A-levels. My original plan was to go to university to study accounting and finance. However, I knew I wanted to join an accountancy firm so I applied for a role at Grant Thornton. When I was offered a position I grabbed it with both hands. By choosing the Accelerate programme I realised I would be able to qualify sooner than if I were to go to university and then join the firm.

What would your advice be to other school leavers?

I'd advise anyone thinking of a career in accountancy to do their research, know what career path they want to take. It's important to know what the industry can offer. As they say, knowledge is power – and you are in control of your career whether you join as a school leaver or later as a graduate.

You can follow me on Twitter, and keep up to date with what I do next @GT_Beoley

We've built our business on our professional expertise. But it's our exceptional service that makes the difference to our clients. And, if you're an ambitious A-level student with the energy and enthusiasm we're looking for, you will too. We'll reward your imagination and initiative from day one. So as well as a competitive salary, we'll provide the study fees needed to gain the CFAB and ACA qualifications, the support to hone your business skills on live projects and the chance to progress your career with one of the world's largest accountancy organisations. To find out more or apply please visit our website.

THE
DIFFERENCE
INSIDE
SHARP
RESOURCEFUL
ATTENTIVE
ENERGETIC

Case Study

ACCOUNTANCY

Alex Lowden, Trainee at leading accountancy firm BDO

What advice would you give a sixth former who is deciding between university and a school leaver programme?

I was very unsure about what path I wanted to follow in order to reach my goals in the future; do I go to university to get a degree or do I go straight into the workplace to learn on the job. I decided to get some work experience which really helped to confirm my decision of the school leaver programme. I think that today, the current market is not all about 'getting a degree', many firms nowadays look for equivalent experience in lieu of not obtaining a degree, this is definitely something that you should consider when choosing.

What has been your best day so far?

My first day on-site at a client. Being able to participate in a real life audit also impacts greatly on your understanding of accounting concepts (especially debits and credits!) which are really beneficial when it comes to your exams. I really enjoyed working in a team and the support you get from your colleagues. It's also fun staying on away jobs and you get to socialise in the evenings.

Why did you decide not to Go the university?

I have always been focused on my career, learning key skills to really be able to thrive in my job role. I strongly believe that you don't need a degree to say that you can do a job. Yes, a degree can look good on a CV, but when you compare it with the years of experience and the additional qualifications that you will gain on a school leaver programme, I think that these programmes offer far more.

Why did you choose the BDO Programme?

I was very impressed with BDO from my initial contact. The school leaver programme is very well structured with clear guidelines about what you will achieve over the coming years. I believe that BDO is a great company to join and the people I met through the recruitment process made me realise that this is where I wanted to start my career.

Find the career you want

After school, you need to find a career formula that's right for you.

That's why we give school and college leavers lots of ways to start a great career in business.

You can start working with us right now or get a degree first. So if you're interested in a career in business, with one of the world's leading professional services organisations, find out more about a career with EY.

ukcareerguide.ey.com



Building a better
working world

What do people with great business careers all have in common? They had ambition, but kept an open mind about how to achieve it. And they all created a career formula that was right for them.

If you want a career in business, you should be looking to start it in the right place. EY is a professional services company – one of the largest and best in the world, with 175,000 people working in 140 countries – and some of the most successful business careers started with us.

Our programmes

EY School Leaver

Duration: 5 years

Requirements: 300 UCAS points and Bs in GCSE Maths and English

Outcome: Professional qualification and no uni debt

Choose this programme if you're interested in getting straight into the world of work, want to avoid uni fees and student debt, gain a professional qualification and qualify a year ahead of graduates.

EY Degree

Duration: 4 years

Requirements: Predicted AAA/A*AB at A Level and Bs in GCSE Maths and English

Outcome: Accountancy degree and graduate job offer

Choose this programme if you want to gain a degree whilst getting business experience, want faster progress to a professional qualification and are set on a career in accountancy.

EY Scholarship

Duration: 3 years

Requirements: Predicted AAB at A Level and Bs in GCSE Maths and English

Outcome: Potential place on our Advisory graduate programme

Choose this programme if you want to gain work experience throughout your studies, are interested in a career in Advisory and want to get paid work experience at EY.

Our experiences

EY Insight

Duration: Open evening

Requirements: Predicted BBB at A Level and Bs in GCSE Maths and English

Outcome: Stand out in the application process and gain an understanding of your career formula

Choose this experience if you are a Year 12 or 13 student who is looking to explore their options after A Levels, want to gain a better understanding of where your strengths lie and how they could fit into the working world and want to find out what life is like at a leading global business.

EY Skills Academy

Duration: 3 days

Requirements: Predicted 300 UCAS points and Bs in GCSE Maths and English

Outcome: An increased understanding of the skills you have that will make you employable

Choose this experience if you want to explore the world of business, focus on enhancing your employability and business skills and start building your own business network.

EY Smart Futures

Duration: 3 weeks

Requirements: Predicted 300 UCAS points and Bs in GCSE Maths and English

Outcome: Opportunity to apply for our schools programmes and greater confidence and business experience

Choose this experience if you are a Year 12 student in receipt of free school meals and/or are the first generation of your family to go to university, want to develop your skills and business knowledge by working on real client projects for a global firm and want to learn from, and interact with, senior people within EY.

PP: SCHOOL LEAVERS EVENT

Every Spring Half Term in Central London



- FIND OUT ABOUT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS, SALARIES AND QUALIFICATIONS
- PRACTISE YOUR INTERVIEW AND NETWORKING SKILLS
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“Such a useful day, more students need to be aware of the alternatives to university.”

“I found the event very useful and made me feel much more confident about my choice of not attending university.”

Book your place now at www.purepotential.org

PURE
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BASE 2014

Business, Accounting and Skills Education (BASE)
National Competition

BASE IS...

ICAEW's national Business, Accounting and Skills Education (BASE) competition for students aged 16–19. A unique and exciting experience, students are able to engage in a challenging business game that enables them to develop key employability skills and understand what it's like to be an ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

TAKE PART...

Consisting of 46 UK regional heats and one spectacular national final, students of all abilities attend their local heat to: find out more about careers in accountancy, finance and business; compete in a thought-provoking business game; and network with professionals at a dedicated employer exhibition.

GAIN SKILLS...

As students take on the role of ICAEW Chartered Accountants, they are asked to resolve a business situation, working through a business case to develop recommendations. Students are able to put their classroom learning into practice and develop transferable skills that can be used in their future careers or education.

MEET PROFESSIONALS...

BASE offers an excellent opportunity for both students and professionals to take part in a whole day activity that inspires the future generation of business leaders. Supported by professional mentors, judges and exhibitors, students are able to network with potential employers and learn from the experts.

WHAT YOU CAN WIN...

- Trophies presented to all regional winning and runner-up teams.
- Regional winners invited to attend prestigious BASE National Final in June 2014, including an overnight stay and attendance at the evening celebration gala dinner.
- National Champions and runners-up will receive monetary prizes and a professional skills workshop for your school or college.
- The BASE 2014 National Champions will be invited to attend a dedicated winner's day at Chartered Accountants' Hall, London.

INTERESTED?

Find out more or complete our online entry form at icaew.com/BASE

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Do you want to be a lawyer?

Do you want to avoid huge university debts?

Do you want to work, learn and earn at the same time?

The Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) is unique in offering non-university routes to qualifying as a lawyer. This means you can work and study at the same time whilst gaining really valuable work experience at a fraction of the cost of going to university.

Train to become a Chartered Legal Executive lawyer with CILEx and you could reach the very top of the legal profession.

Apprenticeships

If you choose to become a Legal Services Apprentice you will have a full-time job that comes with a structured training programme. You will be employed by a law firm or company, you will receive a salary and you will gain a nationally-recognised qualification.

Anyone living in England or Wales, aged over 16 and not in full-time education can be an apprentice.

The CILEx route

If you want to attain legal qualifications without completing an apprenticeship, CILEx offers a flexible route which allows you to fit study around your personal and work life. On average, all of your academic study requirements to become a qualified lawyer can be achieved through four years of part-time study. You can also choose to study full-time or by distance learning and it will cost much less than the average cost of university.

If you choose to complete the full CILEx route to qualify as a Chartered Legal Executive lawyer, you will have gained a degree-equivalent qualification and you'll get to attend your own graduation ceremony.

Entry requirements

To study with CILEx there are no formal entry requirements and we don't require you to collect UCAS points. We do however, strongly recommend that you have a minimum of four GCSE grades C or above, including English language or literature, or qualifications at an equivalent level.

If you already have some legal qualifications, including AS and A2 level law, you may be exempt from some CILEx exams.

Find out more about studying with CILEx:
Email: membership@cilex.org.uk

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Apprenticeships

Karen Woodward,

Interim National Director of Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are thriving in England, and significant Government investment is making it the ideal time to become an apprentice.

Apprenticeships deliver work for young people and adults, and give apprentices the chance to earn while they learn in a real job, gaining a real qualification and a real future. All Apprenticeships have a minimum duration of 12 months, and can take up to four years to complete depending on the level of Apprenticeship, the apprentice's ability and the industry sector.

Currently, more than 100,000 employers in England offer Apprenticeships in 200,000 locations, and they cover over 170 industries and 1,500 different job roles.

At any one time, there are up to 20,000 quality Apprenticeships available on Apprenticeship vacancies at Apprenticeships.org.uk, the official job site for Apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are suitable for all abilities, and opportunities for career progression are increasing with the expansion of Higher Apprenticeships.

Equivalent to degrees, more of these specialised and highly skilled Apprenticeships are being offered each year, giving individuals the chance to continue their professional development

and fully realise their potential. From 2013 Apprenticeships which are equivalent to bachelors and masters degrees and will be offered in subjects such as law, accountancy and advanced engineering.

Employers also value apprentices, and recognise that hiring apprentices helps businesses to grow their own talent by developing a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce.

Recent research shows that employers view qualified apprentices as 15% more employable than those with other qualifications, and long-term data shows that the lifetime benefit of undertaking an Advanced Apprenticeship is between £77,000 and £117,000. This figure rises to £150,000+ for a Higher Apprenticeship, comparable to university graduates, according to a recent report by the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

Prospective apprentices can search through vacancies either at apprenticeships.org.uk or by using the new Av Search app for iPhone and Android.

Once the right job comes up, simply register on Apprenticeship vacancies via the website and follow the step by step instructions to apply for the role. Good luck!

To find out more about Apprenticeships, go to apprenticeships.org.uk, or view real examples of apprentices explaining why Apprenticeships are for them at apprentice.tv.



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'I've always been a hands-on person and always wanted to go into the field of engineering, but I just didn't know how to go about things. I was advised to look into a few apprenticeships and I came across London Underground's engineering schemes, which all appealed to me. I love the variation and the opportunity the scheme offers me. I've come into contact with so many different people who have helped me achieve the goals set for me at the beginning of the apprenticeship. And I've made life-long friendships.

'I would love to stay with the company with the ambition to move up in the chain where I could make more influential contributions to the progress of the company.'

**Seun Vintura, apprentice
Engineering – London Underground**

MAYOR OF LONDON



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SAMMIE ROFFEY

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION & MARKETING APPRENTICE

“UNIVERSITY WASN'T REALLY AN OPTION FOR ME. HAVING FOUND A JOB WHEN I LEFT SCHOOL, I SOON REALISED I LOVED THE WORLD OF WORK! TO PROGRESS MY CAREER I STARTED LOOKING FOR OTHER OPTIONS AND AN APPRENTICESHIP JUST MADE SENSE – MY APPRENTICESHIP IS MADE TO BE PERSONAL TO ME AND IS FITTED TO MY SKILLS AND NEEDS.

WHAT COULD BE BETTER? I'M WORKING TOWARDS A QUALIFICATION AS WELL AS GAINING PRICELESS EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING SOMETHING NEW EVERY DAY!”



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