



Welcome to our Introduction to Post 18 Options

15th April 2026

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Lead

What we will cover

01. Higher Education

Why go to University?

02. The UCAS process

How the process works at SHSB

03. Degree and Higher Apprenticeships

A valid alternative to university

04. Gap Year

How to make the best of a gap year

05. Any Questions?

Please feel free to raise any questions



Why Higher Education?

- Essential for some career paths.
- Develop new transferable skills and subject knowledge.
- Increase your confidence and independence.
- Broaden your experiences.
- Show yourself what you can do.
- Invest in your future.



Types of University Courses

Single

You apply to study one subject throughout your degree.

Joint Honours

You apply to study a degree that covers 2 or more subject. You will graduate with a joint honours degree. Examples include Music and Maths, PPE (Politics Philosophy Economics) Spanish and History

Sandwich Course

These degree courses are 4 years long, with one year being taken out in an industry placement, or studying abroad

Foundation Degree

If you don't have the right qualifications, some universities offer a foundation degree year which helps students prepare for a full degree

Do you want to study abroad?

- Every year we have students apply to study abroad
- This is something that needs a lot of research as funding is different in every country
- Scholarships may be available (eg sports scholarships)
- US University information can be found at the Fulbright Commission website



Choosing a course

Research is key; there are over 50,000 courses in the UK, you can only apply to 5!

- **Look at entry requirements- be realistic and use your predicted grades as a guideline. As a guideline we would suggest you choose 2 aspirational, 2 solid and 1 safe choice.**
- **Look at course content at each university**
- **Think outside the traditional subjects– did you know you could study Zoology, Immunology, Footwear Design and even Brewing and Distilling at university!!!**

What's right for you?

Things to consider- Subject

- Do you enjoy your subject enough to want to invest time, money and effort in studying for a further 3 years?
- Is the subject right for your career path? Check with employers
- Have you looked at the course modules? Different universities offer different course content

Things to consider- University

- Location- do you want a campus uni? A city uni? How far away do you want to be from home? Transport links?
- Extra curricular activities- what's on offer?
- Does their study style suit you?
- How easy is it to find accommodation/part time work/
- How expensive is it to live there?

Open Days

- **Students are encouraged to attend open days and are allowed up to 3 authorised absences for this.**
- **They are a good opportunity to visit a campus and the local area**
- **A fantastic way to see how the university “feels”**
- **A chance to take part in subject lectures, hear speakers talk about university life, take tours of the university and accommodation and speak to current students**
- **Find out when open days take place by visiting www.opendays.com and university websites**

Oxbridge, Medicine, Dental, Veterinary

**It's not for everyone-
careful reflection and
research is required**

- A good candidate will have academic ability and potential, with the majority of their GCSEs at grades 8 and 9 and A grades at AS Level

**Early application
UCAS deadline date is
15th October 2026**

- A good candidate will have a genuine interest in their subject, a thirst for knowledge and be prepared to see things differently

**Most courses require
a pre-admission tests-
you need to find out
what these are**

- A good candidate will be prepared to attend lunch time preparation sessions, complete activities outside of their curriculum learning, Complete a mock interview and spend time practising and preparing for pre admission tests.

Russell Group or not?

- The Russell Group is made up of 24 world-class universities which receive the majority of the research funding in the UK. These institutions share a strong reputation for teaching and learning and attract staff and students from around the world
- They are well-funded, have a high status and are often found at the top of league tables
- For many students, a Russell Group institution will be the right option, but assuming that it is the only option worth considering can be limiting.

Russell Group or not?

- The UK university landscape is diverse, ranging from tiny, specialist colleges to sprawling city campuses; from universities known for academic excellence to those known for impressive employer links.
- There should be something for everyone, but it is a question of finding the right fit.
- Non-Russell group universities can have better satisfaction ratings
- There may be more emphasis on work experience and building industry contacts
- May be better fit creative courses/healthcare

The UCAS Process at SHSB

- Application is entirely online.
- Maximum of five choices.
- Some choice restrictions: medicine, veterinary medicine/science, dentistry(maximum of four)
- Oxford or Cambridge (not both)
- Application cost: £28.95
- 'Invisibility' – universities cannot see where else you have applied to



The Personal Statement 2026 entry

**You have probably heard that the personal statement format changed in 2026
Students are asked to answer 3 separate questions which will ensure you include
exactly what universities want to see. The 3 questions are:**

- 1) Why do you want to study this course?**
- 2) How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course?**
- 3) What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

The Personal Statement 2026 entry

- **You will have 4000 characters**
- **It is still your chance to sell yourself to your universities**
- **You can still talk about your extracurricular activities and you as a person**

What you can do to start preparing now:

- **Engage in wider reading (including watching online lectures, listening to podcasts, taking short online courses-MOOCs)**
- **Relevant visits e.g. museums/exhibitions**
- **Work experience (vital for vocational courses)**
- **Go beyond your current learning- is there something you are interested in that you would like to find out about? Then you should do it!**
- **Record these activities on Unifrog so you don't forget them**
- **Universities don't want a list of activities- they want to know what you have learnt from them**

Work Experience/Shadowing

- Students are encouraged to seek out work experience opportunities through networking, friends and family, contacting local companies.
- Year 12 students have been regularly offered the chance to apply for virtual work experience opportunities via organisations such as InvestIn, Springpod and Speakers for Schools since they started in 6th form.
- Aspiring medics have all been offered the chance to apply for the Southend Hospital work shadowing scheme
- Year 12 students are able to add themselves to SHSB TEAMS groups which concentrate on different Post 18 pathways i.e. Oxbridge, Apprenticeships, Medicine, Careers in Engineering, Law, Business and Finance etc. Please make sure your student has added themselves to the groups they may be interested in as all opportunities for work experience/university master classes/job vacancies/open days are added to these groups.

University Decisions



Once your UCAS application has been received by the universities they will review:

- Personal statement
- Academic reference
- Qualifications
- Contextual Information
- Additionally they may need to consider admissions test results, portfolio submission & performance at interview/audition

Universities can take some weeks/months to make decisions, they have to have done this by the beginning of May 2025. They can make one of 3 decisions:

CONDITIONAL OFFER

you have a place if you meet the conditions set

UNCONDITIONAL OFFER

you have a place no matter what your A Level results are (uncommon)

UNSUCCESSFUL

You have not been offered a place on this course

Your Replies

Applicants should wait for all decisions from all choices, then they should choose 2 courses, one as their firm choice and one as their insurance choice:

- **Firm – if all conditions are met, this is where they will be placed**
- **Insurance – usually lower conditions, in case firm conditions are not met**
- **Any other offers must be declined.**

- **If a student firmly accepts an unconditional offer, they must decline any/all others.**

- **On results day you will be advised through UCAS where you have been placed.**

What do we have planned?

- **20th-29th April Hall exams**
- **30th April-8th May- Future Focus Fortnight**
- **11th May return to school**
- **All of Year 12 will attend UCAS Discovery in Colchester on 10th June**
- **Rest of the term, a summer development plan will be followed by all of year 12 where they will look at various post 18 options, start an online UCAS application and hear from guests about how to make choices**
- **Year 12 attend a presentation from Jane Marshall on the importance of personal statements and how to write them.**
- **Apprenticeship Awareness presentation (for all) and mock assessment centre (for students definitely pursuing an apprenticeship)**
- **17th July End of term- please take some time through the holidays to start to draft your personal statement.**

How can parents support?

-
- Use the parents/guardians' section of the UCAS website at – www.ucas.com/parents
 - Use the UCAS parent information tool for advice, hints, and tips to help someone you care for through the application process.
 - Offer to attend open days and read personal statements – you may have a different perspective.
 - Don't book family holidays at key times.
 - Make sure you read everything carefully that is sent to you.
 - Be aware of school internal deadline dates
 - Sign up for your UCAS monthly parent newsletter.



Degree and Higher Apprenticeships







The past few years have seen a huge increase in the amount of apprenticeships available at many different levels. Students from SHSB have secured apprenticeship roles in a wide range of organisations, including:


Ford, BAE Systems, JP Morgan, BMW, Rolls Royce, Bank of England, Lloyds of London, BDO, Civil Service, Ipeco, Markel Insurance, WTW, PwC and EY

What are Apprenticeships?

- EARN AS YOU LEARN!
- You will be employed and paid a salary with an employment contract
- They last between 1-6 years
- Real responsibilities
- University/college fees are paid by your employer- no student loan required

Work full-time and study part-time

					
Learning	Salary	No debt	NUS	Experience	4-6 Years

 University fees paid by employer and/or Government

Wide range of employers work with 100+ universities to offer degree apprenticeships

Apprenticeship Levels

Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes at grade 4-9 (A*-C)
Advanced	3	2 A Levels / Level 3 diploma / International Baccalaureate
Higher	4,5,6 & 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 & 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

Range of Higher & Degree Apprenticeships

Solicitor

Teacher

Aerospace Engineer

Paramedic

Quantity Surveyor

Project Manager

Insurance Underwriter

Architect

Police Officer

Software Developer

Cyber Intelligence Officer



Where can you find information?

If you are interested in apprenticeships- please join the SHSB Teams group, this is where vacancies are posted as well as helpful information about making applications. Please ask Mrs Hamilton if you need help with this



How do you find apprenticeships?



Register on Find An Apprenticeship




Manage your alerts



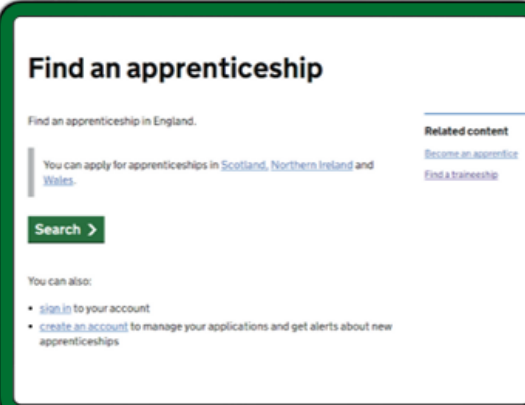
Do your research



Contact companies



Search and apply



Find an apprenticeship

Find an apprenticeship in England.

You can apply for apprenticeships in [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [Wales](#).

[Search >](#)

You can also:

- [sign in](#) to your account
- [create an account](#) to manage your applications and get alerts about new apprenticeships

Related content

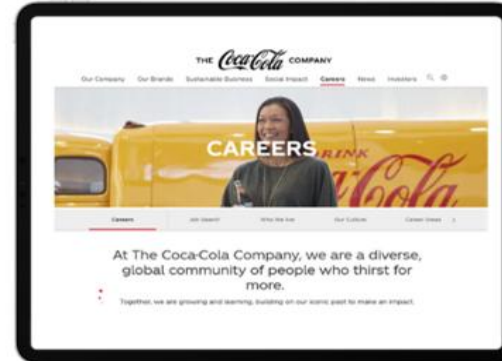
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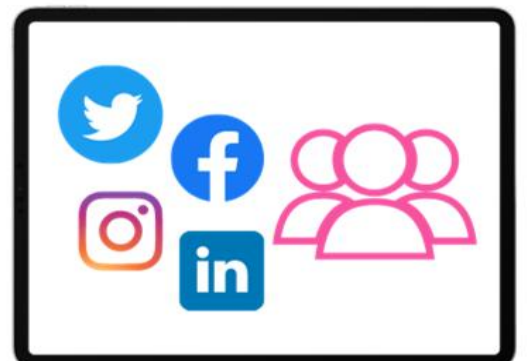
UCAS



Meet the Employer



Company Websites



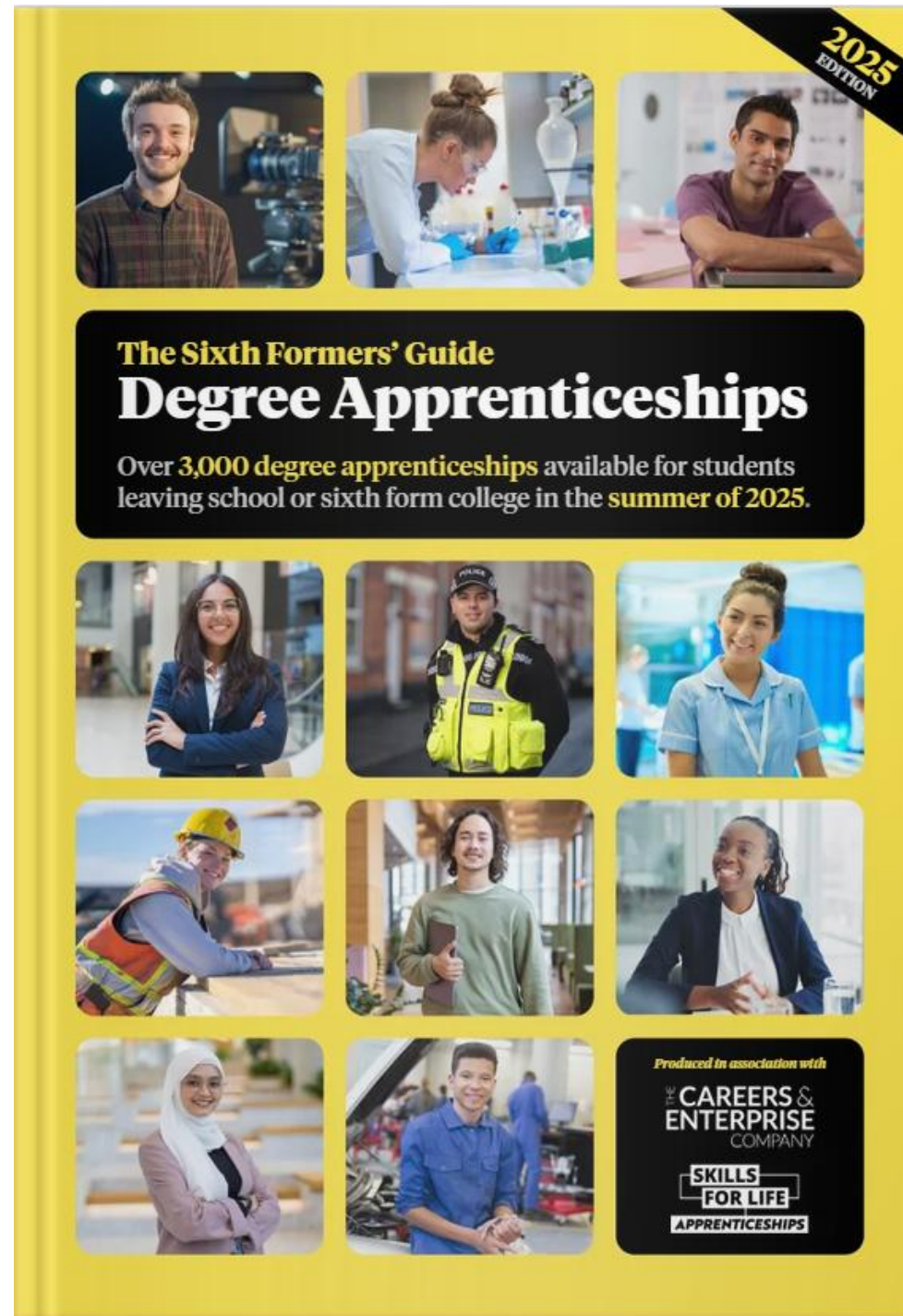
Social Media, Friends & Family



The 6th Form Guide to Degree Apprenticeships

The Sixth Formers' Guide to Degree Apprenticeships is the new A-Z guide to degree apprenticeship employers in the UK. Produced in partnership with **The Careers & Enterprise Company** and the **Department for Education**, the guide explains how degree apprenticeships offer a work-led, debt-free route to a university degree and a graduate job. It features inspiring interviews with degree apprentices working in different industries & sectors, expert guidance from degree apprenticeship employers, and showcases many of the top degree apprenticeship programmes available in 2025.

www.degreeapprenticeships.guide



Apprenticeships-top tips

- **They are by no means the easy option- applications can be very competitive**
- **You apply to individual employers for apprenticeships, be aware that the application process for each employer can be fairly long**
- **Applications can include psychometric tests, online interviews, assessment centres, presentations and face to face interviews- know what each stage involves**
- **Always research the company you are applying to and tailor your application to their values/ethos/job description**
- **Set up a spreadsheet where you can add details of companies you are interested in, the dates their schemes open and how you apply. You can then re-visit this spreadsheet to make sure you don't miss any important deadlines.**

Gap Years (Research and Development Years)

- **Make it count!**
- **Research future career paths**
- **Develop skills, employability and personal profile**
- **Arrange work experience/shadowing**
- **Volunteer**
- **Travel**
- **Study something you have always wanted to**

Employment

- **For those who wish to go out to work we offer Careers Advice and application support**
- **Research is vital**
- **A comprehensive CV will be required**
- **Use Unifrog to support your research**
- **Sign up to email alerts of companies you are interested in**
- **Take advantage of work shadowing/work experience opportunities.**

The Future Starts Now

**If you have any questions/queries, please
contact:**

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