



Your future starts now

Have you ever dreamed about the sort of job or career you'd like to have in say three years time? It needn't be more of the same; with some extra training or 'up-skilling' your prospects could be very different.

You don't have to study for years, be a full time student and incur a huge debt, or move away from your home and work. You could work and learn together.

As you consider the range of possible ideas in this leaflet and think about what would be a suitable starting point for you, take note of the following:

- What level is the course?
- Do you have the entry qualifications?
- What is the cost? And are you eligible for any financial help?
- How many hours a week, weeks in the year would you need?
- What employment or further training might it lead to?
- Would it be necessary to be in a relevant job?
- Will it be necessary to have a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check? (This is essential for anyone working with vulnerable members of the community.)
- Will the course make it easier to find work or change career?

You will probably be able to find answers to each of those questions by talking to your employer or looking in the college prospectus (course guide). But if in doubt speak to staff in Student Services or to a tutor for the course you are interested in.

Now for a closer look at some of the options you could consider investigating further.

Vocational or employer-led short courses

These are designed to give trainees on the job the skills they need to do that job. This employer-led provision could be anything from 5 evenings learning Sage Accounting to 35 evenings training to be a Legal Executive or a Bricklayer (That is one evening a week during term time.)

These are not designed as stand alone training courses. Each student would be working in a related occupation and be studying to extend their range of skills to give themselves greater job security and their employer a more flexible workforce. Many of these courses award an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification)

There are many other course titles you might want to look out for, including: Food Safety for Caterers, Health and Safety in the workplace, Horticulture, Wines and Spirits, Health and Social Care, Computer Aided Design, the Certificate in Testing Electrical Equipment, ILM qualifications in Management, Web Design for beginners.....many, many more than could be listed here.

Skills for Life courses

Skills for Life qualifications are designed to plug gaps in your basic education and help you develop the skills you use in everyday life, such as reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They can also help you boost your CV or move on to further study.

Courses are available from entry level up to level 2 (GCSE level) for anyone who:

- is over 16 years of age
- has left compulsory full-time education
- does not have an up-to-date English or maths qualification at level 2 on the National Qualifications Framework (such as a GCSE)

You can find more information and search for a college offering Skills for Life courses near you at Directgov:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039031

Leisure Courses (formerly part of Adult Education provision)

Designed to be fun, these courses also show how easy it is to pick up new skills. A range of language courses can take you from holiday Spanish to A level Spanish. Art courses cover everything from traditional Chinese brush techniques to contemporary design packages. There are dance classes, creative writing workshops and ideas for decorating your Christmas cake. Learning comes in all shapes and sizes, and you never know where it might take you!

Exploring new employment ideas

Further education courses allow you to explore new career options in bite-sized chunks so that you can gradually move up the academic levels. Here are some ideas:

- You might start with an Introduction to Digital Photography and develop a more focussed interest in Multimedia and Graphic Design.
- Just twenty weeks on a level 2 Counselling Skills course could lead you on to a fully recognised qualification in Counselling and a further 7 terms would give you an Advanced Diploma in Integrative Counselling and Therapy.
- After spending one afternoon for seven weeks on an introductory Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) course you could progress to a Professional Diploma or Certificate in Marketing.
- And if you ever wondered about becoming a Personnel Manager, a one day a week course for a year would give you a CIPD Certificate in Personnel Practice and from there you could do the full training with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Where are these courses? Take a look at the Learning Opportunities website and check out the Further Education College courses near you. Then either look at their college website or ask them to send a prospectus (course guide). Remember the nearest may not be the easiest to reach if you'll be using public transport:

www.learning-opportunities.org.uk

Access courses

Another way of changing direction is via an Access course. These literally give you access to Higher Education even if you have few other qualifications. Most courses start in September and last a year (or two years if done part-time) and most introduce you to an area of work such as Health, Education, Business, or Science. Look at:

www.accesstohe.ac.uk

www.ucas.ac.uk and click on 'access'

www.ucas.com and click on 'access'

www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk

Foundation Degrees

A Foundation Degree might be another good alternative if you want to work and study at university level. Increasingly universities are offering degrees that are not only based partially or entirely in the workplace, but are jointly designed with employers. These are equivalent to the first two years of an honours degree. Look at Foundation Degrees in the South East:

www.foundation-degrees-in-the-southeast.org.uk

The Open University

The OU is probably the biggest provider of short academic courses which provide an excellent introduction to studying at a higher level.

The 10 credit points 'Openings' courses are designed for mature students who may not have studied for a long time (or not at all!). These courses are part-time, last up to 20 weeks, and start 4 times a year in March, June, September and November. The available subjects include health, management, the arts, the environment, psychology, sport and understanding children. To find out more go to:

www.open.ac.uk and enter "Openings Courses" in the search box.

The 30 credit points 'Working and Learning' (BU130) part-time course lasts 6 months and is designed to underpin further work based learning by developing effective performance at work.

www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?C01BU130

There is a wide selection of OU Short Courses, these are also very flexible, starting 4 times a year in February, May, September and November and study can be spread over 2 to 5 months. Take a look at:

www.open.ac.uk/courses/search/showmeshortcourses.shtm

A short course might be a good introduction to the '2 plus 2' scheme where a student will study for 2 years with the OU by distance learning and then join a participating university for the final 2 years of full time study.

www.open.ac.uk/2plus2