

Vocational (work related) education in the South East

Are you making choices about courses and qualifications?

- Do you want to learn in a different way?
- Do you know that you don't have to do A levels to go to university?
- Do you know about vocational qualifications, and what they can lead on to at work, college or university?

What is vocational education?

- Vocational education is made up of a set of work-related subjects and courses you can study in school, college, at a training centre or in the workplace.
- Vocational qualifications are practical qualifications based on getting skills which relate directly to specific industries such as engineering, catering, business, youth work or leisure and tourism.

What is different about vocational learning?

- You can choose to focus on a career area you're interested in.
- You can get direct work experience in your chosen area.
- You can learn in a more hands-on and practical way.
- There will be more assessment through course work and a portfolio (rather than formal exams) that will show how much you have learned.
- You can get the skills employers are looking for.
- You can get nationally recognised qualifications to take you on to a job or to a place at college or university.

Who are vocational courses designed for?

All sorts of people, including those who want to:

- learn about specific jobs, such as being a software engineer, retail manager, youth worker or graphic designer
- develop skills they can use in the workplace such as dealing with customers, working in a team or communicating with others
- learn about different industries like engineering, health and social care or leisure and tourism

Will vocational qualifications help you get a job?

Vocational or work experience will strengthen your CV. Employers look for people who show initiative and have skills and practical experience as well as formal qualifications.

A vocational qualification will:

- enable you to gain the skills employers are looking for, including teamwork, communication, problem solving and the ability to plan and evaluate your own work.
- show you have the ability to apply theory to real-life situations

- build a portfolio of evidence of your work and skills that can be used to support job applications

Will vocational qualifications help you go on to university or college?

You can use any level 3 vocational qualifications to apply to a university or college, qualification 'levels' are explained on page 3 of this information leaflet. Higher education does not necessarily mean having to become a full time student, you can study part-time or do distance learning if you want to carry on earning. Higher education options include:

- **NVQ levels 4 and 5** in a range of occupations such as accountancy, engineering, insurance, social work, or marketing.
- **The Higher National Diploma (HND)** - a full or part-time study route used by a number of skill areas including management. An HND may allow progression to year 2 or 3 of a degree course, depending on the subject, so that a full honours degree can be achieved.
- **Foundation Degrees** - designed by employers and Higher Education providers and studied part-time or full-time. Although they are stand alone qualifications, with further study they can be topped up to an Honours degree.
- **Certificates in Higher Education and Diplomas in Higher Education** - funded for example by the National Health Service for nursing, care and health related professions.
- **Honours degree** - many degree courses are vocational, both traditional courses like law and accountancy, and new courses like leisure management.

You might want to work first and then go on to further study later. Universities and colleges accept older students too. Higher education gives you a better chance to earn more money, develop your job opportunities and learn new knowledge and skills.

To Find out More:

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

Use this website to find out about all the foundation degrees, HNDs and HNCs available in the South East. You can search by subject or place, email a question to individual institutions and see details of individual courses.

www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas This website tells you about the new diplomas for 14-19 year olds, available from September 2008, as an alternative to the traditional GCSE or A level route.

www.learning-opportunities.org.uk/info-sheets - All you need to know, in a series of downloadable leaflets, to start your higher education journey.

Qualification Levels and Vocational pathways

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) groups together qualifications that place similar demands on you as a learner and sets out the level at which these qualifications can be recognised in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Within any one level, qualifications can cover a wide mix of subjects, and take different amounts of time to complete.

The framework can also help you see how one type of qualification can lead on to other, higher levels of qualifications. The NQF comprises nine levels (entry level to

level 8). The table on the next page shows a selection of individual qualifications and how they appear in the current framework.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are based on national standards for various occupations at levels 1 to 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. NVQs are available to adults and young people alike. You can take NVQs if you are employed or studying at college with a part-time job or access to a work placement. You can also take an NVQ qualification at level 2 or 3 as part of an Apprenticeship.

Qualification Levels and Vocational pathways

