

Understanding Qualifications

Types of Qualification

- **Academic** - covering knowledge of a wide range of subjects for example geography, computer science, or English
- **Vocational -broad-based**, covering a broad area of work for example such as business or health and social care)
- **Vocational, job-related** - covering the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to learn about or train for a specific job or job area.

Levels of Qualification

- **Entry level** (split into entry 1, 2 and 3)
- **Level 1:** e.g. GCSEs at grades 3-1/D-G
- **Level 2:** e.g. GCSEs at grades 9-4/A*-C/ BTEC First Diplomas
- **Level 3:** e.g. AS/A levels/ BTEC National Diplomas/ T Levels/OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technicals.

A Levels

A levels are level 3 qualifications available in a wide range of subjects. A levels are usually studied full time for two years.

AS Level courses are equivalent to half an A level and are now standalone qualifications. AS levels are still available at York College locally. You can study for an AS level full time for one year.

To ensure that you are able to cope with the level of study, schools and colleges will expect you to have gained four or five GCSEs at grades 9-5/4 or A*-C, or equivalent, before enrolling for AS/A level courses; you also need very good GCSE grades in any subjects you want to continue at AS/A level. In some subjects, such as psychology, law, film studies or economics, you can usually start the course without previous related study. However you may need certain grades in other GCSE subjects for example you may need a grade 5 in English and maths to study psychology.

T levels

T levels are new vocational qualifications being introduced in England from September 2020. Designed with employers, they provide a technical alternative to A levels. They offer a mixture of classroom 80%/workshop20% learning and a lot of work experience, preferably in a variety of settings. The first 3 subject areas available from 2020 are:

- design, surveying and planning for construction
- digital production, design and development
- education and childcare

Locally all 3 of these subject are on offer at York college. Childcare and education is on offer at Scarborough 6th form college, Scarborough TEC and Bishop Burton colleges.

BTEC qualifications

BTECs are vocational qualifications, they are offered by many further education colleges and some schools. Some cover broader areas of employment such as health and social care, business, or art and design. Others cover more specific job areas, such as beauty therapy, engineering or equine management.

- **BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First** qualifications –
- **BTEC Level 2** - these are called BTEC Firsts
- **BTEC Level 3 National** qualifications – these are called 'BTEC Nationals - they are awarded points on the UCAS Tariff and are equivalent to 3 A levels.

OCR Qualifications

- **OCR Cambridge Technicals** are for students post 16 and are at level 2 and level 3. They are available in a number of subjects including health and social care, IT and engineering. As with BTECs, they are available in different sizes, but not all subjects are always available in all sizes or at both levels.
- Level 3 Cambridge Technicals can lead to HE as they are awarded points on the UCAS Tariff and are equivalent to 3 A levels. Scarborough UTC offers these qualifications in certain STEM subjects.

NVQs, & City & Guilds Qualifications

- There are also other vocational qualifications relating to particular jobs or job areas. These qualifications are offered by large awarding organisations, such as City & Guilds and OCR, as well as by bodies that offer qualifications in certain sectors.

Some qualifications are achieved through the assessment of your ability to do a job, either in the workplace (apprenticeship route) or through a simulated work environment. These **competence-based qualifications** are available in a wide variety of specific occupations - from plastering to hairdressing. The names of these qualifications vary but a lot are called **NVQs** (National Vocational Qualifications). You normally progress at your own pace, achieving units that build towards a qualification as you gain more skills.

Most job-related qualifications are available at levels 1-3 and vocational colleges offering these types of courses locally include Scarborough TEC and East Riding College in Bridlington.