



SHREWSBURY
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Unlocking potential...Shaping futures



Further Education

Further Education

Definition of Further Education

A distinction is usually made between Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), both of which cover education at a higher level than secondary school. Higher Education is usually provided at universities and Further Education is primarily taught at FE and community colleges, work-based learning, and adult and community learning institutions. (For more information on going to university, please refer to the [‘Thinking of University’](#) booklet).

Providing you are under 19 at the start of a FE course, you will not have to pay course fees. However, you will not be entitled to a student loan, so if you decide to study away from home, you will have to pay for your own accommodation, living costs etc.

Further Education Colleges

FE colleges are usually larger than Sixth Form colleges, although what they provide does vary a lot, depending on what else is on offer locally. The FE college may specialise in subjects which closely link to the needs of commerce and industry. These include subjects such as art, agriculture or technology, many of which can lead to university entry. In areas where the FE college is the only option, they will offer everything you could find in a Sixth Form college. Most FE colleges offer a number of practical courses ranging from IT to hairdressing. Locally, Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology (www.shrewsbury.ac.uk) offers courses in over 20 occupational areas including:

- Level 2/3 AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) Foundation/Intermediate Accounting.
- Level 3 ILEX Professional Diploma in law & Practice.
- Level 3 Personal Assistants Programme.

The Qualifications System

All qualifications fit into a national framework, which has nine levels. Entry level is at the bottom and level 8 is at the top. Every level includes different types of qualification; some are subject-based, some are work-related and some are job-related.

The levels show how hard a qualification is – the higher the level, the harder the qualification. Most employers ask first-time applicants for level 2 qualifications and the demand for people with qualifications at level 3 and above is increasing.

Entry Level qualifications

- Basic qualifications. They build confidence and help you to use your learning in everyday situations. They include Entry Level functional skills and vocational, personal and social development qualifications.
- With Entry Level qualifications you can go on to study for Level 1 qualifications, apply for work-based training or work towards supported employment and independent living.

Level 1 qualifications

- Basic qualifications. They build understanding of a subject, industry or area of work. They help you to use your learning in everyday situations and routine tasks.
- They include Level 1 functional skills, personal and social development qualifications, the Foundation Diploma, Level 1 vocational qualifications (eg NVQ, BTEC Introductory Certificates, OCR Nationals) and GCSEs achieved at grades D to G.
- With Level 1 qualifications you can go on to study for Level 2 qualifications and apply for an apprenticeship or a job with training.

Level 2 qualifications

- Qualifications that give you good knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject, industry or area of work. They help you to use your learning in a variety of tasks.
- They include Level 2 functional skills, the Higher Diploma, Level 2 vocational qualifications (eg NVQ, BTEC First, OCR Nationals) and GCSEs achieved at grades A* to C.
- With Level 2 qualifications you can go on to study for Level 3 qualifications or apply for an advanced apprenticeship or job with training.
- Most employers use this level as their minimum entry requirement.

Level 3 qualifications

- Qualifications that give you detailed knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject, industry or area of work and that help you to apply your learning with little support.
- They include A/AS Levels, the Advanced and Progression Diplomas, Level 3 vocational qualifications (eg NVQ, BTEC Nationals, OCR Nationals), the International Baccalaureate and Cambridge Pre-U.
- With Level 3 qualifications you can go on to study at a higher level. Universities expect most applicants to be qualified to this level. You could also apply for a job with training. Employers are increasingly looking for applicants who are qualified to at least this level.

Qualifications at Levels 4 to 8

- These are higher level, specialist and professional qualifications. They develop very high knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject, industry or area of work and involve the independent application of learning.
- They include NVQs at Levels 4 and 5, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, Foundation degrees, Honours degrees, postgraduate qualifications and professional qualifications (eg Associate, Certified or Chartered Professional).
- They can help you to gain promotion and take on a higher level, professional or specialist role in a subject, industry or area of work.

For more information on the qualification system, please check out the following links:

- www.connexions-direct.com/whichwaynow/ChooseTheRightOptions/YourOptions/Qualifications
- www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained

Choosing a Course

It is important to take time to choose the right course and qualifications. Consider the following questions:

- What are you good at and what do you enjoy? Most people do better when they study a subject they like.
- Do you want to learn something new? For many courses, you may not need any previous experience.
- What course structure will suit you? Do you prefer end-of-year exams, continual assessment or a mixture of both?
- What learning style will suit you? Do you prefer lectures, classroom discussions or practical workshops?
- Where will the course lead? Does it fit in your long-term plans?

If you are not sure which career you want, it makes good sense to choose subjects that you are interested in, but remember – being good at a subject doesn't necessarily mean it is the right choice for you if you are not genuinely interested in it. If you are enthusiastic about a subject you are likely to apply yourself fully.

- Find out what is available in your local area by searching the online 14-19 Area Prospectus. You can find this by visiting <http://yp.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus>.
- Find careers advice and search for over 900,000 courses across the UK at <http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk>
- The Directgov website offers help with finding the right course at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm>.
- Read college prospectuses or browse their websites to find out more about the courses they offer.
- Check what the course requirements are.
- If you have got a specific career in mind, check the qualification requirements and research your options thoroughly. Visit the Connexions Direct Jobs4U careers database www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/index.cfm.
- Find out as much information about the content of the course as possible. Which modules will you study? You should be comfortable that you will be able to understand it.
- Check whether there is an open day you can attend to meet tutors, see the facilities and find out more about the course.
- If you are not sure what you want to do, make an appointment with the College Guidance and Progression Manager or the personal adviser from Shropshire Youth Connexions.

Art and Design Foundation Courses

Art and Design Foundation courses are classified as FE courses and many degree courses in Art and Design prefer students to have completed an Art Foundation course before applying. This 1 year full-time course is designed to:

- Provide you with an insight into the breadth of disciplines available in Art and Design.
- Give you more time to concentrate on your portfolio and develop your skills and techniques.

There are over 250 Art and Design Foundation courses available throughout the country (a list is available on the UCAS website www.ucas.com). However, the majority of students from SSFC apply to Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology.

How to Apply

To apply for a course you will need to complete an application form available from the college concerned. Prospectuses and application forms for Shrewsbury College of Art & Technology are available from Student Services. For other colleges, contact them direct or download from their website.

Application deadlines will vary from college to college, so check the prospectus carefully. Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology will accept applications through the year (if they still have places).

It is also important to remember that each application requires a reference from SSFC. This can take 3+ weeks to process, so make sure you hand in your application in plenty of time. Please note that an early application always demonstrates enthusiasm and commitment to the course!

Recommended Websites

- www.direct.gov.uk
- www.connexions-direct.com
- www.shropshireyouth.com
- www.shrewsbury.ac.uk