



STUDYING A MIXED PROGRAMME

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UNDERSTANDING A LEVEL AND VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

What's the Difference Between A Levels and Vocational Qualifications?

Choosing the right post-16 qualification is important and understanding the difference between A Levels and BTECs/CTECs/AAQs and T Levels can help get you on the path to where you want to be. At Franklin, you can design your study programme by choosing from over 70+ courses.



A Levels

- **What are they?** Academic qualifications where you typically choose three subjects to study over 2 years.
- **How are they assessed?** Mainly through final exams at the end of Year 13.
- **How will I study?** A Levels are more theory-based and exam-focused. They're a great option if you plan on going to study at university.
- A Levels are best for students who enjoy traditional classroom learning, are comfortable with revision and exams, and want to keep their future options open.

Vocational (Including BTECs/CTECs/AAQs/T Levels)

- **What are they?** Qualifications with a more career focused approach. Subjects such as Business, Health & Social Care, etc.
- **How are they assessed?** Mostly through coursework and practical tasks, with some exams in certain units.
- **How will I study?** More hands-on study which is applied to real-life learning. Many courses include work placement or industry-style project-based learning, so you get a feel for the industry.
- Best for students who prefer continuous assessment, and may want a more direct route into a specific career or industry.



WHY CHOOSE A MIXED PROGRAMME?

Many students thrive when combining A Levels with vocational qualifications. This blended approach offers the best of both worlds, including:



Flexibility

Students play to their strengths, whether you prefer exams, coursework or a mix of both.

Broader Skill Set

You'll develop your academic knowledge and practical skills, which are valued by employers and universities value.



Focused Career Development

Vocational subjects can develop real-world skills and give you valuable knowledge in career-related areas.

UCAS Compatibility

Mixed programmes carry full UCAS point equivalence and are accepted by most universities.



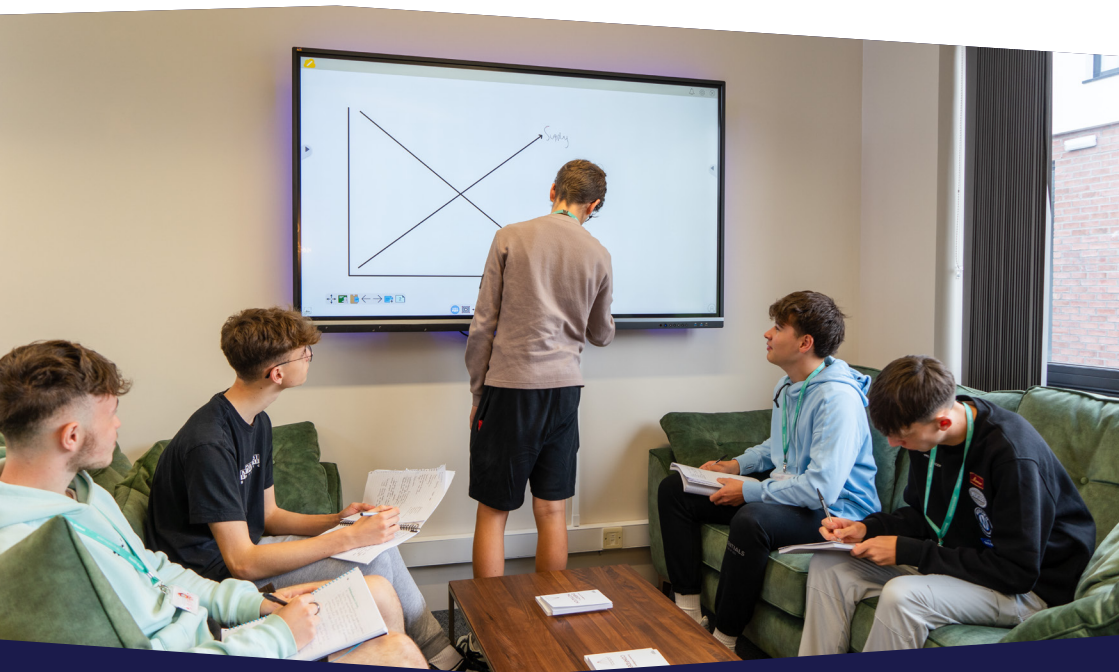
Greater Motivation

Many students feel more focused when they study subjects they enjoy and are good at.





COURSE ASSESSMENTS



A Levels

- Assessment is exam-based, usually taken at the end of Year 13.
- Some subjects include limited coursework, but your final grade is mainly based on your final exams.

Vocational Qualifications

- Your course is divided into units, which are assessed throughout the year.
- Coursework and practical assessment make up the majority of marks.
- Some units have external exams.
- You usually get a chance to resubmit coursework to improve grades in BTECs. Whilst in CTEC there may be more opportunities, which you would need to ask your tutor for further information.
- If you don't pass an exam, you can usually resit in the same academic year (twice a year).



WHAT TO EXPECT

A Level and vocational courses are set up differently because they're assessed in different ways. This means the amount of work, and when it feels busiest can vary depending on the type of course you choose. Below is an overview of what you can expect during your studies:

A Level		Vocational
START OF COURSE, SETTING ACADEMIC FOUNDATION	YEAR 1	START OF FIRST UNIT
FIRST INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS	SEPT - OCT	SUBMISSION OF FIRST COURSEWORK UNITS OR FIRST EXAM
END-OF-YEAR MOCK EXAMS	DEC - JAN	FINAL DEADLINES FOR FIRST-YEAR UNITS
UNIVERSITY / APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATIONS	MAY - JUNE	UNIVERSITY / APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATIONS EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS
PRE-FINAL EXAM REVISION	YEAR 2	FINAL COURSE WORK SUBMISSIONS
FINAL EXAMS	NOV - JAN	FINAL MODERATION
	APR - MAY	
	MAY	

Summary:

A Levels build gradually toward final exams at the end.

Vocational qualifications have regular assessments and are less end-loaded.



MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

There are many myths and misconceptions surrounding vocational courses, to clear up any uncertainties, here is a quick myth-busting guide to address the most common myths:

Myths

Vocational courses aren't for academic students.



Universities don't accept BTECs/CTECs.



You can't get high grades on vocational courses.



Vocational courses are easier.



Mixed programmes don't keep doors open.



Truths

Vocational qualifications involve in-depth learning and are excellent for analytical, reflective students who prefer practical study whilst gaining real-world insight.



Over 90% of universities (including many Russell Group institutions) accept vocational qualifications, especially when combined with A Levels.



You can achieve up to D*D*D* on a BTEC/CTEC Extended Diploma – the equivalent of 3 A*s at A Level.



They're not easier, just different. Instead of one big exam, you will work consistently through coursework, practical tasks and some tests.



In fact, they often provide wider progression options. Studying a mix of both academic and career-based routes can open doors to both universities and career pathways.





UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT DIFFERENCES

A Levels: Class assessments help track progress but don't count toward your final grade. Results may vary throughout the course, with final grades based on exams in the second year.

Vocational Qualifications: Assessments are ongoing (including exams and coursework) and contribute directly to your final grade, which may make progress feel more consistent. Meeting deadlines is important to be successful in your coursework units.

Key Point: Feeling more successful in vocational courses doesn't necessarily mean you're performing better, it's just a different grading structure.

- Distinction* (D*) grade is equivalent to an A* grade at A Level
- Distinction (D) grade is equivalent to an A grade at A Level
- Merit (M) grade is equivalent to an C grade at A Level
- Pass (P) grade is equivalent to an E grade at A Level

*Grading equivalence subject to change

Tip: Regular 1-1s with tutors can help you understand your progress and stay on track.



DO UNIVERSITIES ACCEPT VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS?

Most UK universities accept vocational qualifications, often in place of or alongside A-levels, for many degree courses. While historically some universities favoured A-levels, especially for competitive courses, this perception has changed, and vocational qualifications are now widely regarded.

For some degree courses this may differ, and a specific A Level may be required. You should check individual course entry requirements for a degree that you wish to pursue. For example, if you wish to study 'Engineering', a number of universities will require A Level Mathematics.

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 **01472 875 000**

 **admissions@franklin.ac.uk**

 **www.franklin.ac.uk**

    **@FranklinGrimsby**

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