



What
Next?

The Post-Exam Survival Guide


West Midlands
Combined Authority

THE CAREERS &
ENTERPRISE
COMPANY

**Do what you can,
with what you have,
where you are.**

Theodore Roosevelt

26th President of the United States



So, you've received your exam results. What next?



It's a huge achievement to complete your exams, and now you've got an exciting future ahead.

But what if you didn't get the results you were hoping for?

Don't worry, we've got you covered.

You've still got lots of options, and this guide can help you choose the right one!



Your exam papers are closed, but your options are still open

The pressure's off. You've finished your exams and can breathe a sigh of relief – well done!

We're here to tell you that what comes next doesn't have to be daunting: this is an exciting time, and regardless of whether you got the results you were hoping for, there are plenty of options available that can lead to a super successful future.

Maybe you've chosen what you'd like to do next and you're already getting ready for the adventure.

Maybe you haven't decided yet or didn't quite get the results you needed – that's okay too.

Not sure where to go next? We've got you covered – read on for 5 great options to help you decide.

1

Switch up your subject

If you're hoping to go to college or university but didn't quite meet the entry requirements, how about choosing a different course option?

Play to your strengths and go for a subject you've shown capability in – that way the institution will want you on board, and you might just discover a path that was meant for you all along.



2

Think outside the classroom

Many institutions will consider applicants not only based on exam results, but also on your extracurricular achievements – it's always worth checking their individual websites to see what they look out for.

If your results weren't what you hoped but you still want to pursue your original plan, think about proving yourself in other ways such as sports, work experience, or individual qualifications (you can find those on our [Course Finder](#)).

HINT: Start putting together a portfolio of all your skills to help with applying for courses or jobs.



3

Try before you buy

If you're still unsure of what you'd like to do with your career after receiving your results, volunteering, internships, or work experience can give you a glimpse into various industries to help you decide where to go next.

Be bold and contact any companies you might be interested in working for – they might just give you the opportunity to try it.



4

Go vocational

Apprenticeships or other skills-focussed routes are a great option and often don't require high level exam results – you can even earn money whilst you learn!

These are available in many industries and at all levels, and you can expect to gain valuable work experience as well as a qualification to really catapult your career.

HINT: If you failed your Maths and English, don't worry – you can often still get an apprenticeship and will be supported to retake these subjects at the same time.



5

Get networking

If you've received your results but may not be able to pursue the career route you were hoping at this stage, you can try reaching out to others who are doing what you want to do to find out how they made it.

LinkedIn is a great place to do this – simply set up an account and find people by industry or job title, and they might just be able to point you in a new direction with insider hints and tips.

If in doubt, reach out to your peers, school or local authorities for careers support.

Don't worry, all is not lost and you're still going to do great things!

Find out what's next after exam results



Got the results you wanted?

YES

Congrats! Do you know what you want to do next?

NO

Don't worry! Do you see yourself working yet?

YES

Great, you'll smash it!

YES

An apprenticeship or training provider can get you hands-on experience as well as a qualification

NO

Are there any courses you'd like to study?

NO

That's okay, you can contact a local Careers Advisor to discuss your options

YES

College, sixth form, or university may be your best next step

NO

Don't Panic! Do you want to pursue your initial plan?

YES

Get networking, consider building your work experience or volunteering

NO

Are there any foundation courses available in relation to your chosen area of study?

YES

A foundation course or funded qualification could help you boost your skills

NO

There are lots of options available - how about earning some money?

YES

Earn while you learn with an apprenticeship!

NO

Read on for more options, support, and contacts

**Goal setting is
the secret to a
compelling future.**

Tony Robbins

American author,
coach and speaker

**Education is the most
powerful weapon,
which you can use to
change the world.**

Nelson Mandela

South African anti-apartheid activist,
politician, and statesman who served
as the first president of South Africa
from 1994 to 1999

**Don't stress, it's
not that deep.**

Anonymous





Nervous about sharing your exam results?

It can feel like receiving your exam results will affect not only you, but others close to you as well – including your parents.

Are you feeling a little nervous to share your results with them?

Don't worry, you're not alone. Many students can feel that way – it's in our human nature not to want to let anyone down.

One student says:

“I didn't get the results I wanted, and I was apprehensive to tell my parents because they can be a bit strict. It was totally fine in the end though, they just wanted me to be happy, and they helped me look for different options.”

All that pressure of revising and preparing for exams is over, so it's likely your parents will now just want to help you find your best next step.

And the most important part?

They simply want you to be happy – that's always worth bearing in mind.

Take it from a parent:

“I remember when my kids went through their exams, and perhaps looking back I put the pressure on a bit – only because I wanted the best for them.

Now, I would tell them that their results do not define their future, as there are so many options available, and you can still do great things. I'm proud no matter what.”

Remember, it's likely that your parents have been in the exact same situation as you, nervously waiting for their results as they thought it would “define their future.”

That's why they might appear to push you to succeed where they perhaps didn't.

But exam results don't equal success in life, and your parents will support you to achieve that, whatever path you take.

Remember: your exam papers are closed, but your options are still open.



If you are struggling with your mental health and feel you need support visit:

www.kooth.com

We understand that it may sometimes be difficult to share the news of your exam results with parents. Your local careers advisors are there to talk to.

Missed out on your Maths or English?

If you just missed out on obtaining a grade 4 or above in English and maths, don't panic there are still plenty of options available to pass these key subjects.

For Maths and English, resitting your exams in these subjects is advised if you haven't achieved a pass (grade 4). There are different options available for how you can study and resit these subjects:

- If you got a grade 3 and will be studying full-time (540+ hours) next year, you'll need to resit the GCSE
- If you got a grade 3 and will be studying part-time (150 – 539 hours), you can take a functional skills qualification instead of GCSE
- If you got a grade 2 or below, you can take a functional skills qualification instead of GCSE
- If you're going on to an apprenticeship, studying Maths and English will be part of your programme



Will resitting my GCSEs affect my future?

Resitting one or two subjects won't completely hold you back. Most schools and colleges will let you study your GCSEs alongside A-levels for other subjects. You can still progress onto the next level and continue on your planned path.

What are Functional Skills?

Functional skills are a set of essential skills that employers and universities class as essential key skills. These include numeracy, problem solving, literacy, communication and critical thinking.

How soon can I resit my exams?

Depending on the subject and your situation, you could be able to resit your exams after the beginning of the academic year or in the summer of 2025.

What are the benefits of functional skills?

- Functional skills are a great alternative as they have less content than a traditional GCSE and can be completed in a faster time.
- They run all year round, unlike GCSEs which only run twice a year and must be sat in an exam centre.
- Functional skills can be taken anytime and even from home.
- They are based on skills that further education providers and employers class as fundamental to success in education or the workplace.

Is there an alternative to resitting my exams in school or college?

The level 2 functional skills qualification is an alternative to a GCSE grade 4.

So, there are lots of different options if you didn't pass your Maths or English GCSEs. Speak to your careers advisor to explore what's available and the best route of study for you.

Celebrities whose exams didn't go to plan

You may be feeling disheartened if you didn't receive the results you wanted, but you are not alone and this doesn't mean you can't go on to be successful and achieve your life goals. You might just need to take an alternative path to get there.

Remember everything happens for a reason!

There have been many successful celebrities who have failed their exams, but have gone on to do well for themselves:

Sir Richard Branson

After having a turbulent ride studying, Richard Branson left school at 16. A few years later, he launched his first business, a magazine named 'Student'. Presently, he owns Virgin Atlantic, one of the largest airlines globally.



Ryan Gosling

After turning 17, Ryan Gosling decided to drop out of High School and moved from Canada to LA to pursue his acting career. When Gosling turned 12, he tasted some fame in Hollywood when he joined Disney's Mickey Mouse Club as a cast member. However, his big break came from The Notebook.

Holly Willoughby

TV presenter Holly Willoughby was privately educated and struggled with dyslexia. While she's never disclosed her exact grades, she didn't do well enough to study psychology at university.

However, as life unfolded, a new path pushed her towards a television career, landing her a role hosting the ITV Saturday morning kids' show 'Ministry of Mayhem'. This led to her most notable show as host of 'This Morning'.

Adele

Adele is one of the biggest recording stars in the world. She attended the prestigious BRIT school in London and did not get any A-Levels. Adele has gone on to release four studio albums and won many awards worldwide including 16 Grammy's.

Simon Cowell

Simon Cowell left school with just two O-levels — the equivalent of two GCSEs — but then dropped out at 16. He began his career working in the mailroom at his father's company, EMI Music Publishing.

Now, Simon Cowell is known for the hit talent shows X-Factor and Britain Got Talent, which have been franchised worldwide.

Cameron Diaz

Cameron Diaz dropped out of secondary school at age 16 to pursue modelling full-time. She soon landed her first acting gig in The Mask and is now renowned for her roles in Shrek, There's Something About Mary and Charlie's Angels.

Opportunities
don't happen,
you create them.

Chris Grosser



Are you eligible for a Supported Internship?



What are supported internships?

A structured, work-based study programme for 16–24-year-olds with special educational needs and disability (SEND), with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The programme's main aim is focused on getting you the skills you need to progress into paid employment or on to further learning.

With a supported internship you will remain in full-time education. The programme will run Monday to Friday during term time. Throughout this time there will be some classroom-based learning at college, but most of your time will be spent on a work placement.

This means you will do most of your learning at work, which gives you the experience of learning on the job. This could be the right choice for you if you know you learn best by 'doing'.

Alongside the work placement, you will develop your English, maths and IT skills as well learning about the world of work.

What are the benefits of a supported internship?

- 70% on the job training
- Help and support from an expert job coach
- Gain qualifications and work experience
- Develop key skills
- Build on transferable skills such as confidence, problem solving, creative thinking and teamwork
- Progress into paid employment or further study
- Fully funded

How can I find out about supported internships in my local area?

There are several ways you can find out about supported internships in your local area including advice from:

- School
- College
- Local authority, local offer



Get clear on Clearing

If you're reading this because you've finished your A-Level exams, firstly, congrats!

Secondly, you may well be wondering what Clearing is and, most importantly, how it can help you with your next steps.

Don't worry, we're not telling you to head to a campsite in the middle of the forest and forget this all happened – it's not that type of clearing.

Clearing is a super useful tool to help you get the most out of your results, as it's a one-stop shop for any unfilled university places.

On Results Day, you can contact Clearing (provided by UCAS) for the following reasons:

- You've changed your mind about the course you'd like to study
- You've changed your mind about the university you'd like to attend
- You didn't meet the entry requirements of your initial offer, but would still like to attend university
- You've done better than expected and would like to go elsewhere
- You missed the initial application deadline

Clearing is usually open until around October, so you've got plenty of time to use it.

Simply call up on Results Day, or login to your UCAS account online, where you'll find a full list of available places and details to contact the universities directly.

Think of it as a catalogue of choices at your disposal, with thousands of options to help you find your best next step, regardless of your results.

If you've changed your mind about going to university altogether, that's okay too.

You could do an apprenticeship (available at all levels, including degree), go straight into work, take a funded course to find the right industry for you, and so much more.

Visit www.ucas.com to discover more about clearing and how it works

To find out more about apprenticeships visit: www.apprenticeships.co.uk

To find out more about funded courses near you visit the [WMCA Course Finder](#)



**It is never too late
to be what you
might have been.**

George Eliot

English novelist, poet and journalist



Discover what support is available to you

So, what next?

If you're still figuring out the right choice for you after receiving your exam results, that's totally fine.

There's plenty of support out there to help make the decision that bit easier, and it might be closer than you think.

We've rounded up careers support that's available in your local area, which can help you get into employment or training.

Birmingham

Birmingham Careers Service

🌐 birminghamcareersservice.co.uk
✉ BCareers@birmingham.gov.uk

BOA

🌐 boa-academy.co.uk
✉ info@boa-academy.co.uk

Birmingham Adult Education Service

🌐 learnbaes.ac.uk
✉ information@baes.ac.uk

Birmingham Metropolitan College - BMet College

🌐 bmet.ac.uk
✉ ask@bmet.ac.uk

Fircroft College

🌐 fircroft.ac.uk
✉ enquiries@fircroft.ac.uk

Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College

🌐 jcc.ac.uk
✉ info@jcc.ac.uk

Queen Alexandra College

🌐 qac.ac.uk
✉ info@qac.ac.uk

South & City College Birmingham & University Centre

🌐 sccb.ac.uk
✉ hello@sccb.ac.uk

Dudley

Dudley Connexions

🌐 connexionsdudley.org
✉ connexions@dudley.gov.uk

Dudley Adult Education Service

🌐 dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/adult-and-community-learning/
✉ acl@dudley.gov.uk

Dudley College of Technology

🌐 dudleycol.ac.uk

Halesowen College

🌐 halesowen.ac.uk
✉ info@halesowen.ac.uk

Kidderminster College

🌐 kidderminster.ac.uk
✉ enquiries@kidderminster.ac.uk

King Edward VI College, Stourbridge

🌐 kedst.ac.uk
✉ reception@kedst.ac.uk

Coventry

Careers Advice Shop

🌐 cw-chambertraining.co.uk

Job Shop

🌐 coventry.gov.uk/jobshop
✉ jobshop@coventry.gov.uk

Coventry College

🌐 coventrycollege.ac.uk
✉ hello@coventrycollege.ac.uk

Hereward College

🌐 hereward.ac.uk
✉ enquiries@hereward.ac.uk

NWSLC - North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

🌐 nwslc.ac.uk
✉ enquiries@nwslc.ac.uk

Sandwell

Sandwell Connexions

🌐 connexionssandwell.co.uk
✉ sandwell_connexions@sandwell.gov.uk

Sandwell College

🌐 sandwell.ac.uk
✉ enquiries@sandwell.ac.uk

Think Sandwell

🌐 sandwell.gov.uk/think-sandwell/help-finding-work
✉ enquiries_recruitment@sandwell.gov.uk

Solihull

Solihull for Success

🌐 solihullforsuccess.com/job-seekers-home

✉️ skillsforsuccess@solihull.gov.uk

Solihull College & University Centre

🌐 solihull.ac.uk

✉️ enquiries@solihull.ac.uk

National

National Careers Service (NCS)

🌐 nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

Youth Employment UK

🌐 youthemployment.org.uk/careers-advice-help/

✉️ info@youthemployment.org.uk

Walsall

Walsall Works

🌐 go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-works

✉️ WalsallWorks@walsall.gov.uk

Walsall College

🌐 walsallcollege.ac.uk

✉️ info@walsallcollege.ac.uk

Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton Connexions

🌐 wolvesworkbox.com/directory/organisations/connexions.html

✉️ connexions@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Wolves at Work

🌐 wolvesatwork.com

✉️ wolvesatwork@wolverhampton.gov.uk

City of Wolverhampton College

🌐 wolvcoll.ac.uk

✉️ mail@wolvcoll.ac.uk



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