

Going to college?

Thinking about going to college, but still not sure if it's right for you? Read on for some information and advice we hope will help you to decide.

Choosing what to study

There are a few things to consider before choosing what to study at college.

- What are you good at?
- What do you enjoy doing or learning about?
- Which courses will make the best use of your interests, abilities and strengths?
- What type of course will help you to achieve your career goals?

Once you've thought these things through your first step should be to find out about the different subjects and qualifications you can take at college.

What's on offer?

Scotland's 28 colleges offer a huge range of different courses. Here are just a few examples of the subjects you can study:

- Accounting
- Art and Design
- Business Administration
- Catering
- Child, Health and Social Care
- Computing and IT
- Construction
- Engineering
- Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy
- Music or Drama
- Social Sciences
- Tourism and Hospitality.

Most college courses are work-related and designed to help you get a job in a specific industry or type of work. But colleges also offer courses that will:

- prepare you for the world of work
- lead to general educational qualifications, like Highers and National 5s
- prepare you for entry to an apprenticeship
- prepare you for entry into higher education.

Ways to find out more?

Visit the websites of the colleges you are interested in, and read their prospectuses, for detailed information.

Take every opportunity to get along to college Open Days or Evenings. You'll get a much better 'feel' for the place and be able to speak directly to the people who are responsible for individual courses. Don't be afraid to ask questions, they want you to.

Follow any colleges you are interested in on social media, for example Facebook and Twitter.

Levels and types of qualification

Colleges also offer many different levels and types of qualification, including:

National Certificates (NC) and National Qualifications (NQ) (SCQF Levels 4-6) – normally one-year courses, entry qualifications vary from no formal qualifications to five subjects at National 5.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) (SCQF Levels 4-11) – work-based qualifications, entry qualifications vary depending on the subject studied and the level of SVQ.

Higher National Certificates (HNC) (SCQF Level 7) – normally one-year courses, entry qualifications usually vary from 1-2 Highers, or a relevant NC/NQ. It's possible to progress from an HNC to the first or second year of a degree.

Higher National Diplomas (HND) (SCQF Level 8) – normally two-year courses, entry qualifications are usually 2-3 Highers and a group of National 5 subjects or a relevant HNC. It's possible to move from an HND to the second or third year of a degree.

Degrees (SCQF Level 9-10) – normally three or four-year courses, although some take longer, entry qualifications are usually 4-5 Highers or a relevant HND. Many colleges now offer degree-level courses in partnership with universities.

It's important to check the entry level of any courses you are interested in. Can you meet the entry requirements? Do you, or will you, have the specific subjects the course requires?

Also, always check what the course can lead to. Ask for specific information about the destinations of last year's students when you go along to Open Days. It pays to think and plan ahead.

The chance to progress

You can really go places with a college qualification.

Many college students who complete NC or NQ courses stay on at college and move on to study more advanced courses at HNC or HND level. These may then lead to degree level courses at college or university.

Many colleges have a partnership or '**articulation**' agreement with one or more universities. These agreements help to ensure that students can progress smoothly from a specific HNC course to the second year of a relevant degree, or from a specific HND to the third year of a relevant degree.

If you are planning to progress from one level of study to another, for example from a Higher National course at college to a degree course at a university, **always** check in advance with the institution that offers the higher level course that the course you are currently studying, or planning to study, will be recognised for entry.

If you'd like to apply read our article ['Applying to college'](#).