



## **Sixth Form Employment and Gap Year Handbook**



**St Joseph's College**

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## NON-UNIVERSITY OPTIONS AT 18 YEARS OLD

### Apprenticeships

Paid on-the- job experience with training (80%) and a college or university element (20%). There is a whole separate information booklet on Apprenticeships

### School leaver schemes

Similar to apprenticeships, but tend to need high A level grades (like universities). A chance to learn and train with a large company while earning a wage. Offered in sectors like accountancy, engineering, finance, IT, law, leisure and retail. Similar to graduate employment schemes - often leads to same end point- but run over a longer period of time.

### Internships

A period of work experience (often unpaid) where you can try out a job and get to know an industry.

### Volunteering

Follow your interests and get a foot in the door or simply help out; it can provide good experience and improve your CV.

### Traineeship

A course that includes a work placement (usually unpaid) that will get you ready for an apprenticeship or a job. Designed for GCSE level applicants.

### Get a job

Get straight into the working world to start earning. You'll need an up-to-date CV and cover letter.

### Gap Year

Travel and/or work and/or volunteer before moving on to the next stage of your life

### Start Your Own Business

Becoming an entrepreneur can be exciting, but you need think very carefully about your ideas and make a solid business plan.



## School Leaver Schemes

Similar to Apprenticeships – some firms’ schemes are Apprenticeships, but look for School Leaver Schemes too as they are often very similar: i.e. the chance to learn and train with a large company while earning a wage. Offered in sectors like accountancy, auditing, engineering, finance, IT, law, leisure and retail. Similar to graduate employment schemes run over a longer period of time.

**Location:** You'll often rotate between different locations with the same company to get experience and it can include distance learning or time in college or university

**Duration:** 3 to 7 years

**Entry requirements:** Usually high grade A levels (typically BBC or 112 UCAS points) or equivalent and a keen interest in the sector you want to work in

**Qualifications:** A university degree and/or professional qualification

**Leads to:** Professional employment

Most companies offer a guaranteed job upon successful completion of the programme which makes school leaver programmes very attractive and competition for roles can be stiff; a school leaver programme is not for those who are “umming and ahing” – it should be viewed as a genuine alternative to further full time study. Many firms will stipulate minimum A-level (or equivalent) points as an entry requirement and these are often high (typically BBC for accounting for example) so your hard work at 6th form is just as important as it is for gaining a place at a first choice university.

### Examples of School Leaver Schemes:

Price Waterhouse – [pwc.co.uk](http://pwc.co.uk) (Accountants/Business Consultants)

Mazar’s - [mazars.co.uk](http://mazars.co.uk) (Auditors)

RSM – [rsm.co.uk](http://rsm.co.uk) (Accountants)



## Internships

An internship gives you the opportunity to work at a company to learn new skills and gain experience in a particular industry or job role. Sometimes called a work placement or volunteering, they've become an established stepping stone into employment.

There are various types of internships:

1. **Work shadowing** – you follow one or more members of a team throughout their day, allowing you to learn directly from experienced, sometimes top industry professionals.
2. **Work experience placements** – give you a taste of working in your chosen profession or field. These are often part of degree courses, but there is also a range of programmes for school leavers, or you could arrange your own placement. They can last from a few days through to several weeks, or longer.
3. **School leaver programmes and holiday schemes** – offered by some of the larger management, financial, and accountancy firms. These act as training programmes and a way for companies and interns to find out if it is the right role and company for them.

The time spent on an internship can range from a few days to some months, but more often than not, it will be unpaid so you need to be aware how you will support yourself if you get a longer internship/work placement. Even though it is unpaid (and that is arguably unfair and discriminatory) it is much more likely to be a success if you try not to treat it as if you are doing a favour. In other words, be on time, be reliable and do your best; it may at least get you a good reference from an industry insider.

### Find out more

- [Student Ladder](#) – work experience placement information.
- [e4s.co.uk](#) – has an internships section.
- [notgoingtouni.co.uk](#) – has an internships section.



## Volunteering

Like an internship, volunteering can provide invaluable experience. Volunteering is best undertaken in a spirit of giving rather than thinking about what it can do for you. It is much more likely to be a success if you want to do it; try not to treat it as if you are doing a favour. As with an internship, be on time, be reliable and do your best.

- [vinspired](#) – volunteering charity for 14 – 25 year olds.
- [www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/who-else/volunteering](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/who-else/volunteering) lots of links to volunteering opportunities for young people.

Volunteering doesn't have to involve a 6 month trip to another continent; there are plenty of opportunities to volunteer in this country and on a part-time/weekly basis.

**NB International Citizen Service (ICS) (also known as VSO) is currently (June 2023) suspended, but in April 2023 the government announced plans for a relaunch of a similar scheme later in 2023.**





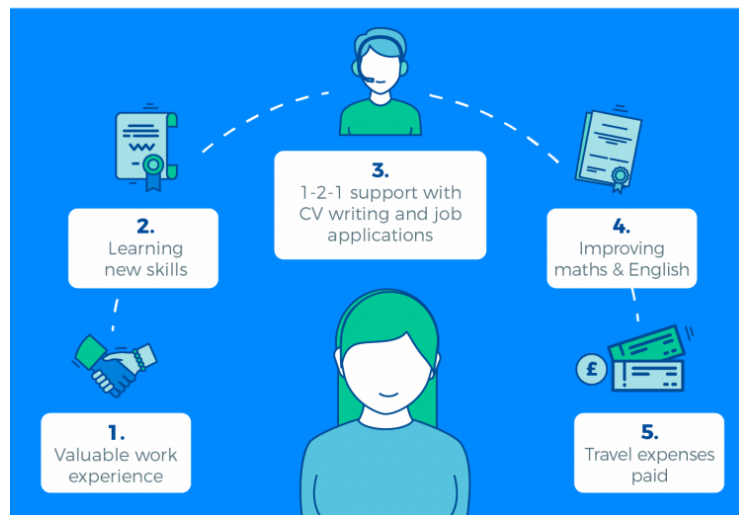
## Traineeship

A course that includes a work placement (**almost always unpaid**) that aims to get you ready for an apprenticeship or a job. Designed for GCSE level (generally lower grades) applicants, this is the level below an apprenticeship and shouldn't be confused with one.

It lasts from 6 weeks to around 6 months.

### Why sign up for a traineeship?

Take a look at some of the main benefits



## **Get a job**

Get straight into the working world to start earning. You will need a CV and a good covering letter – amend the CV template we have at college which is shown on the next page, or find your own online.

Check online:

[www.indeed.co.uk](http://www.indeed.co.uk)

[www.e4s.co.uk](http://www.e4s.co.uk)

[www.notgoingtouni.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)

### **Jobs that might not have been advertised yet:**

Do you have a Saturday job that you love? Ask about management training or potential progression within the organisation; if you're good at it and enjoy it, there may be an opportunity right under your nose, so don't be shy – ask.

Similarly, if there's a place of work that you know you would ideally like to work in, then go in and ask if there are any vacancies. Or if it's not local, send an email covering letter with your CV attached asking if you can have a job. You've got nothing to lose!





## CV Template

### Address

01234 900621 • 07123 456789 • name@mail.com  
Driving Licence • Own Car

## Personal statement

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A highly motivated and hardworking individual, studying for their A-Levels, predicted to receive excellent grades in both Maths and Science. Seeking an apprenticeship in the engineering industry to build upon a keen scientific interest and start a career as a maintenance engineer.

Mechanically minded, with a methodical approach to working and an eagerness to learn and develop personal skills in a practical setting. Eventual career goal is to become a fully-qualified and experienced maintenance or electrical engineer, with the longer-term aspiration of moving into project management.

## Key Skills

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Advanced problem solving and numeracy skills  
Accomplished communication skills, both written and verbal, developed through numerous essays and presentations given during my time at college  
Ability to take the initiative and work well under pressure, ensuring strict deadlines are met, as successfully demonstrated during work experience placement project  
Flexibility, whilst maintaining enthusiasm and commitment to each project  
Proficiency in all areas of Microsoft Office, including Access, Excel, Word and PowerPoint

## Education

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### College/School Name

*(2023 – 2025)*

A-levels (predicted):

Physics – A

Maths – B

Business Studies – B

### School Name

*(2018 - 2023)*

10 GCSEs, grade 9-4, including Maths (8) and Double Science (88)

## Work Experience

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### Part-time Sales Assistant, Shop Name, Location

*(April 2022 – Present)*

#### Key results:

- Achieved four out of five revenue targets

- Personally billed over £10,000 since starting position.

- Demonstrated resilience and ability to upsell products, consistently meeting KPIs set for adding more value to sales.

- Significantly improved negotiation skills, regularly converting customers from point of enquiry to sale.

### Pharmaceutical Company (*unpaid work experience*)

*(Summer 2022)*

#### Duties included:

- Shadowed a key member of laboratory staff, observing their day-to-day work

- Spent a morning working within customer service centre, listening to client complaints and understanding company best practice when responding

- Assisted in project on risk management and contingency planning in case of failure at distribution centre

- Learned about company project management lifecycle methodology

- Gained knowledge of key health and safety standards used within the industry

## Hobbies & Interests

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Over the last two summers I have helped a family friend restore a classic sports car. This has triggered a passionate interest in mechanics and automotive restoration and, now that the project is finished, I have continued to build my knowledge by attending various classic car events.

During this time, I also decided to set up a blog around the project. Initially starting as a way to ask other collectors for advice whilst tracking progress, I began to enjoy writing about the subject and have now started writing occasional freelance articles for an online automotive magazine.

## References

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References are available on request.

## **Start Your Own Business**

Becoming an entrepreneur can be exciting, but you need think very carefully about your ideas and make a solid business plan.

If you are determined to start your own business (and you will have to very determined) then the best place to begin is The Prince's Trust.

<https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people/programmes#start-your-business>

The Prince's Trust offers advice specifically aimed at young people starting their own business including a free consultation which will help you avoid any pitfalls in the process.



**Prince's Trust**

**START  
SOMETHING**

## Gap Year

If you decide to have a gap year, it's important to set goals to make your time productive, so you need to identify what you want to achieve. You might want to:

- have a break from study
- gain new skills/experiences
- earn money
- spend time deciding what you want to do
- do a combination of the above

Here are some pros and cons to consider.

Pros	Cons
An opportunity to have a break from studying and return refreshed. You can volunteer, get valuable work experience, and travel the world.	Some people find a year out becomes a distraction from their longer term plans.
A productive gap year can be valuable on your CV.	An unstructured year out may not add much value to your future – careful thought and planning is essential.
You could relate the experience and activities to the subject area you plan to study.	It can be harder to return to study or work after a year-long break.
You can earn and save money towards your higher education costs or future plans.	It can be expensive and you could find yourself in a worse financial position at the end.
You will develop maturity if you don't yet feel ready for higher education or work life. For some careers, it can be an advantage to be slightly older and have some life experience.	If you don't get organised, you may end up spending your gap year just 'thinking about it'.

## Do your research

Before planning your trip travel check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\) website](#) for the latest travel advice about how it may affect your plans.

It's really important to form a plan of what you will do for the year, no matter what your gap year idea is, and you need to start planning well in advance. Some voluntary work schemes are popular and have strict deadlines, and you need to consider when you need the money to pay for airfares or visas.

There are loads of ideas you could consider – some might fill an entire year, others a few weeks or months. You could also combine more than one idea.

There is a wide range of gap year and volunteering schemes available. If you're using an agency or scheme, check out how long they have been running, if they are financially sound, and are members of a reputable organisation, such as ABTA or Year Out Group, where they agree to follow a code of conduct.

## **Students who plan / decide to go to University after their Gap Year.**

If you're applying via UCAS for deferred entry, then with luck, once you get your required grades, you'll have a University place waiting for you after your Gap Year.

If you are not applying via UCAS this year but are planning to (or if halfway through your Gap Year you decide to) apply for university entry in 12 months' time with your achieved grades, then make sure you are aware of all of the UCAS deadlines for next year.



## Preparation for applications

Whether you're applying for a job, an Apprenticeship, a School Leaver Programme, an internship or a bank loan for a business start-up, you need to do research and preparation beforehand.

### Find out about the organisation:

The absolute bare minimum is to look at the organisation's website. What does the company/organisation actually do? Look at the About Us and News sections.

Look at their twitter/facebook/Instagram feeds too. That will tell you what's going on at the moment. (Or, it will tell you that they don't update their social media very often!)

Is the job what you thought it was? Check the job description very carefully to see what it entails.

### Writing your CV:

Use the College templates or one you find online.

It's good practice to emphasise your good points/experience but **don't lie about anything** – you'll be found out.

### Covering letter

If a job asks for a covering letter and CV rather than asking you to fill in an application form, then the covering letter is the equivalent of asking the question: why do you want this job and why are you suited to do it? You need to answer according to the job description.



### Interview Practice

Don't let your first interview be the real thing; you wouldn't do public speaking without practising and interviews can be nerve-wracking too. We are happy to give you a mock interview, just as we do with University applicants. You can also practise with your family. If you practise a few times, you'll realise what kind of questions might trip you up and can be prepared when they are asked for real.

See below for common interview questions and what you could ask if they say "Have you any questions?"



## Interview Preparation

### Sample questions to practise!

Tell me about yourself.

Why do you want to work for this organisation?

What are your strengths?

What is your greatest weakness?

How would your teachers/lecturers describe you?

How would you say your academic qualifications will help you contribute to this role?

Tell me about your life at college.

Give me an example of a situation where you have shown leadership?

Besides your academic qualifications what can you offer to us?

Tell me about a time you worked in or led a team.

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Tell us about a time you had to deal with a conflict.

### What to ask when they say: 'Have you got any questions?'

It's fine to ask anything you're unclear about from the previous interview, but don't ask questions which you've been given the answer to or which you should know already (such as the length of the apprenticeship).

Practical questions are also useful to ask:

What would be the next step in the recruitment process?

(If you're moving away from home) I'm going to be moving to the area if I get the job: have you any tips on where the best place to live is?

But do ask more interesting questions like these – they will be bowled over by your initiative:

What have previous holders of this post gone on to do?

What do you (the interviewer) enjoy about working here?

How will my work performance be measured and reviewed?

## TIPS FOR JOB HUNTING

Finally, some pieces of advice if you're looking for a career and haven't got the well-worn tracks of UCAS to guide you like your friends who are going to university...

1. Don't do nothing! Plan now, just like people applying for UCAS. Get your CV sorted and maybe take up a new activity or volunteer so that you can put it on your CV. And even if you end up working in a job that you see as temporary, make plans for what you'd like to do next and use your spare time to volunteer or look for an internship in that area.
2. Learn to have more confidence in using the telephone – don't be afraid of it and if there's a phone number, use it. Lots of jobs are landed over the phone. If you're speaking to the person in charge of applications, then you're ahead of all of the emails in their Inbox. If you leave a message and the person doesn't get back to you, then ring again in two days' time – persistence can pay off. Which leads to...
3. Persistence can pay off. If someone says they will contact you by a certain date, ring them or email them (politely!) the day after if they haven't done so. If you really want an internship in a certain industry, keep applying to as many places as you can and until a firm categorically rejects you, keep coming back; employers will see that you are serious.
4. If, down the line, you find you don't like the path you've chosen, first of all, give it another go – things may look different in a few weeks' time. But then if you still don't like it, don't be afraid to rethink. If (against all odds) you miss the college environment and studying, then maybe relook at university. Or, look for another career; your experience can help you achieve.

