

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Guide



**Next Steps
South West**

OUR PARTNERS

FALMOUTH
UNIVERSITY



With such a variety of industry positions available to you, it's important to find out what life is really like as a young apprentice and whether this study route matches up with your long-term ambitions.

With application support, activities, and advice from real degree apprentices - this booklet has it all. Look out for **red pages** containing short **activities** and **glossary terms** highlighted in **blue**.

Are you ready? Let's go!

About Us

Next Steps South West (NSSW) is a collaboration of fourteen partner universities and colleges throughout Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, funded by the Office for Students (OfS).

As the region's National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), we help young people navigate their own personalised journey to higher education (HE). Throughout the region, we hold events and activities designed to inspire students aged 13-19 years old to fulfil their potential.

We aim to build aspirations, awareness and access to HE, helping target students make an informed decision about their future.

For more information on NCOP visit officeforstudents.org.uk/adviceandguidance



Part of the
**National Collaborative
Outreach Programme**

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Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships are a form of work-based learning, combining on-the-job training with classroom study.

You can gain real employment, real training, and a real salary.

Many people choose an apprenticeship instead of a traditional **college** or **university** route, whilst still gaining a **higher education** qualification.

Higher apprenticeships

The term 'Higher Apprenticeship' refers to all apprenticeships from level 4-7. Some levels of higher apprenticeship may not include an accredited component, however many higher apprenticeships will include the achievement of a qualification (e.g. **HNC, HND Foundation Degree** or a **Professional Qualification**). They take a minimum of one year to complete.

Degree apprenticeships

Degree Apprenticeships have been developed as part of higher apprenticeship standards, allowing you to achieve a full bachelor's or master's degree (Levels 6 and 7) as a core component of the apprenticeship. They are an alternative route to traditional degrees - mixing academic and vocational learning to help propel students into the world of work and addressing skill gaps in industry. They take a minimum of three years to complete, and the scheme is currently exclusive to England and Wales.

STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS

When you are researching an apprenticeship, you may hear that it uses a 'framework' or 'standards' style. The apprenticeship style you undertake will have no effect on the final **qualification** you receive, but there are a few key differences.

The government apprenticeship reform has meant that all apprenticeships will move over to the standards style by 2020, but some employers still use the old frameworks style.

The most noticeable difference between the two is the method of assessment. In a framework, apprentices are assessed throughout their apprenticeship, meaning you 'tick off' a skill and won't necessarily have to demonstrate it again. Whilst in a standards style apprenticeship, apprentices will have the chance to demonstrate their skills in an **end-point assessment**, which is only taken when the employer and the apprentice feel they are ready.

Level 8	Doctorate PhD					
Level 7	Master's Degree MA, MSc, Mphil	Higher Apprenticeship	Degree Apprenticeship			
Level 6	Bachelors Degree BA, BSc	Higher Apprenticeship	Degree Apprenticeship			
Level 5		Higher Apprenticeship		Foundation Degree FdA, FdSc		HND
Level 4		Higher Apprenticeship		HNC		

Facts and stats

92%

of degree apprentices reported feeling satisfied with their apprenticeship.

87%

of apprentices remained in the company after completing their training.

65%

of higher apprentices said they were satisfied with their apprenticeship.

7 /10

higher apprentices were very satisfied

9 /10

higher apprentices in work upon completion of training

*Apprenticeships Evaluation 2017: Learners, Department for Education, Nov 2017

Most popular sectors

30% Business, Administration and Law

16% Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies

16% Other

24% Health, Public Services and Care

14% Retail and Commercial Enterprise

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Undergraduate degree	Higher/degree apprenticeship
Gain a level 4-6 qualification	Gain a level 4-7 qualification
Up to £9,250* per year tuition fees	All training is paid for by the employer or government
Usually full-time study but part-time options are available	A minimum of 20% protected study time, during contracted work hours
Apply through UCAS	Apply through employer
Unpaid	Paid at least the minimum training rate in first year, but many employers opt to pay a higher salary
You get the "university experience" many people value	You go straight into the world of work
Learn in lectures and independent study	Learn on the job in a practical way

* Figures correct as of April 2019



ACTIVITY: FAMOUS APPRENTICES

There are quite a few famous people who were once an apprentice.

In this activity, look at the list of celebrities and match them up with the apprenticeship you think they undertook. Has anyone surprised you?

David Beckham

Jamie Oliver

Billy Connolly

Alex Ferguson

Gordon Ramsey

Stella McCartney

Michael Caine

John Frieda

Hairdressing

Toolmaker

Boilermaker

Tailoring

Catering

Plumbing

Football

Hotel Management

David Beckham – Football, Jamie Oliver – Catering, Billy Connolly – Boilermaker, Alex Ferguson – Toolmaker, Gordon Ramsey – Hotel Management, Stella McCartney – Tailoring, Michael Caine – Plumbing, John Frieda – Hairdressing

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Getting onto a higher/degree apprenticeship is competitive, partly because there are a limited number available, and also because anyone can apply for them, even adults who are already in employment.

Entry requirements can include 5 **GCSEs** grades 9-4 (A*-C) including English and Maths. Additionally, you will need a level 3 qualification (**A-LEVELS, NVQ, BTEC** etc.), and some employers will expect or require applicants to have studied subjects relevant to the apprenticeship.

FINANCE

If you are under the age of 19, or in your first year of an apprenticeship, you are entitled to at least the apprentice rate. As of April 2019, this is £3.90 per hour, but many employers choose to pay a higher salary rate. If you are over 19, after your first year of your apprenticeship you are entitled to the National Minimum Wage, which varies depending on your age.

For current figures, visit the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Neither Higher nor Degree Apprentices are eligible for **student loan** funding, but if you're aged 16 – 24, your employer and the government will pay your tuition fees.

Money advice and discounts

The NUS Apprentice Card offers discounts at over 140 UK shopping, dining and travel locations. This costs £11 for a year but pays for itself in no time! For more information, visit [apprenticeextra.co.uk](https://www.apprenticeextra.co.uk)

My Money Now is run by the National Youth Agency; offering apprentices free money advice workshops. This includes understanding payslips and bank statements, budgeting, and avoiding fraud – all very useful things to be aware of as you enter the world of work. For more information, visit [nya.org.uk](https://www.nya.org.uk).

BENEFITS

When you leave school or college, a wide range of **higher education (HE)** courses will be available to you, including **foundation degrees** and **undergraduate** programmes. Each offer a unique experience, but apprenticeships in particular vary from the traditional university or college lifestyle. Whilst reading the benefits below think to yourself if this sounds like the **post-18** pathway for you.

Study while you work

Apprenticeships allow people who have completed a level 3 qualification to dive straight into the world of work, whilst still gaining a higher education. Most apprentices work a 30-hour week, including any 'off-the-job' training. Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement, meaning employers must ensure they are providing each apprentice with a minimum of 20% protected study time, within their contracted hours. Time can be divided in three ways:

1. Distance

Working off-site remotely e.g. online.

2. Blended

Working one day a week at a partner college or university

3. Block

Working at college or university for several consecutive days less frequently



Industry head start

If you decide to undertake a higher or degree apprenticeship, you will have a competitive edge on those who have taken the traditional higher education route because you will have years of industry experience under your belt.

Employability

The knowledge you gain on an apprenticeship will be practical and applied, tailored specifically to the industry you have chosen to work in. For this reason, many employers choose to keep on their apprentices after they have completed their apprenticeship.

Earnings

When you undertake a higher or degree apprenticeship, you will have all the benefits of being a paid employee, including paid holiday and a pension.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Higher and degree apprenticeships are a great option for some candidates. However, this route isn't without obstacles.

Take a moment to read through the points below and think to yourself, how this might impact your Higher Education experience.

Lower pay

Apprentices are entitled to the minimum apprentice wage, but this is below the National Minimum Wage. With that being said, most local employers advertising higher or degree apprenticeships will pay more than the minimum wage (e.g IBM, GSK and Babcock).

Location

The amount of apprenticeship programmes available is currently low compared to traditional university courses, so you should be prepared to move for these opportunities. Make sure you factor in the cost of living against your earnings to check that you will be able to sustain yourself while completing your apprenticeship.

Timing

Apprenticeships are advertised on a rolling basis – you have to stay on the ball and regularly check for vacancies. Often employers prefer to employ staff before investing in further training, so look out for relevant job opportunities too.

One subject specialism

A danger of taking an apprentice position is that if you change your mind after you have completed your course, you will have a very specific qualification in a certain subject area, which means you run the risk of committing yourself to an industry you aren't happy in. To lower this risk, make sure you have done your research and are 100% happy with your choice before accepting a place.



Competition

Getting a place on a higher and degree apprenticeship is competitive, with apprenticeships at levels 4-7 making up just 1.8% of the total number of HE places available in 2018*. In addition to this, anyone can apply for them, including existing employees. It would be sensible to have a back-up plan in case you don't find a place on a higher or degree apprenticeship.

Student life

As an apprentice, you will be working full time and may miss out on the 'university experience' that many people value. Being part of a busy campus community could see you make new friends and new memories.

Workplace limitations

In your first few months as an apprentice you'll be learning to work in a new environment with new equipment, so don't be surprised if you can't do it all on day one! Some tasks are restricted due to legal or practical standards (e.g. electrical or construction work) but with time and training you'll gain license to participate in more hands-on tasks.

* Is a degree apprenticeship a viable alternative to university? FE Week, Aug 2018

ACTIVITY:

PROS & CONS

Can't decide between a traditional degree and an apprenticeship? Note some pros and cons for each below.

Apprenticeship

Pros



Cons



University degree

Pros



Cons



AVAILABLE SUPPORT

Care leavers

You will be eligible for a £1000 **bursary** from the government if you are aged between 16 and 24 at the start of your apprenticeship and have been in the care of your local authority. It would also be a good idea to contact your local authority to see if any additional support is available to you.

Mental health

Two in every five university students report poor mental health*, so it's important to familiarise yourself with the support available to you.

There is a free apprentice support service delivered by Remploy which is available to any apprentice who is experiencing mental health difficulties at work. It is designed to complement any existing occupational health service you use.

This may include:

- emotional wellbeing support
- advice on workplace adjustments
- coping strategies
- support plans

Visit  [remploy.co.uk](https://www.remploy.co.uk) for more information

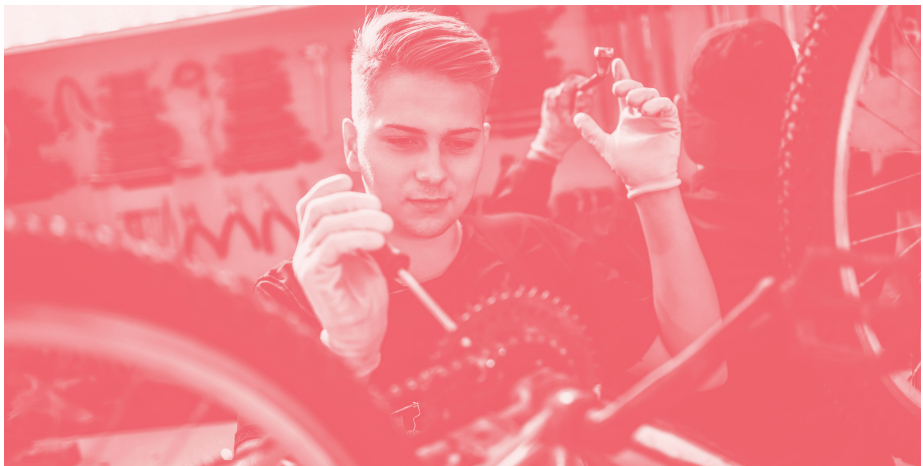
Disabilities

Almost all apprenticeships can be made accessible, and being disabled should not hinder your chances of becoming an apprentice. In fact, many employers recognise the importance of giving all candidates a fair chance and see this as a means of being able to select apprentices from a larger talent pool.

The Equality Act 2010 also applies to apprenticeships, which means that both employers and training providers are required by law to make reasonable adjustments for an employee with a disability. This could mean several things, such as physically adjusting the workplace or providing continuous long-term support to help you learn and carry out the work.



The 'disability confident employer' badge means that the organisation has made specific commitments to recruiting and retaining disabled employees. You'll see this badge displayed within the advert.



ACTIVITY: WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

Consider which factors are most important to you when researching an apprenticeship, then order them in priority on the map below.

Factors could include salary, location, career progression, course content, assessment style, employer reputation, company size and apprenticeship length. There is no right or wrong answer, but it is important to start shortlisting the things that matter to you.

Most Important

Least Important

HOW TO FIND AN APPRENTICESHIP

With so many websites advertising apprenticeships, knowing where to start is key!

You apply for an apprenticeship in the same way you apply for a job - approaching employers directly instead of speaking to the training provider.

The 'Find an apprenticeship' section on the government website is the main way of searching for higher and degree apprenticeships. You can search for vacancies in your area and filter them by level.

Alternatively, if you know an employer who does not currently recruit apprentices, but would like to, you can direct them to the 'Recruit an apprentice' section of the gov.uk website.

[🔗 gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)

UCAS publishes a list of higher and degree apprenticeship vacancies you can apply for

[🔗 careerfinder.ucas.com/jobs/apprenticeship/](https://careerfinder.ucas.com/jobs/apprenticeship/)

Prospects also publish a searchable list of degree apprenticeships.

[🔗 prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/apprenticeships](https://prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/apprenticeships)

The Rate My Apprenticeship website has a list of the top 100 apprentice employers rated by school and college leavers.

[🔗 ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk](https://ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk)

The Amazing Apprenticeships website includes a vacancy snapshot feature showing you the number of vacancies in top companies. There are also links that allow you to research them further.

amazingapprenticeships.com

Remember, specific employers (particularly smaller businesses) will usually advertise vacancies on their own website, so if you have a company in mind it's best to bookmark their website and social media and check regularly for opportunities.

You can also contact the National Apprenticeship Service on 0800 015 0400

apprenticeships.gov.uk

1

Decide

which industry you are interested in

2

Research

companies and locations of apprenticeships

3

Apply

for apprenticeships that suit you

HOW TO APPLY

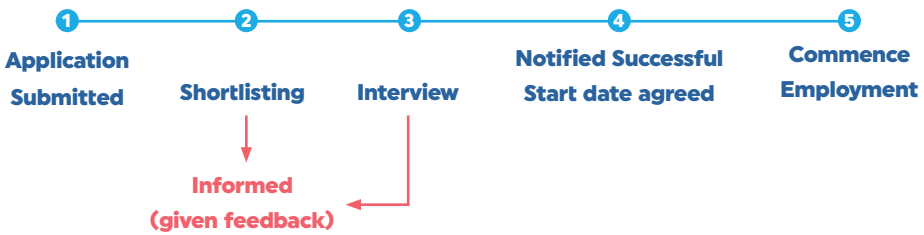
The application process varies from company to company and most employers will tell you the steps you need to take on their vacancy pages.

There may be a link to an application form, but if they only provide an email, you can presume that they expect you to send in a **cover letter** and **CV**. Make sure you check the application closing date and write it down somewhere you will regularly see (e.g. a calendar) and keep track. Beware if a vacancy posting has no closing date - this usually means they will close the advert when they have had enough applications. If this is the case, make sure you apply quickly!

If you are successful after application shortlisting, the employer will usually invite you to an interview. This can be face to face, via Skype, or over the phone, or as part of an assessment day.

If you are successful after the interview phase, you will agree a start date with your employer and begin your apprenticeship.

What happens next?



ACTIVITY: PERSONA PATHWAYS

There are usually several routes into the same **profession**. Below are profiles of two people who want to become paramedics. Which route do you think is best for them? Use the flowchart below and the information in this booklet to help you decide, then join up their pathway.

SARAH

I am doing A-levels in Human Biology, Philosophy, and English Language.

I am confident with written work but struggle to speak in front of an audience.

I grew up in a big city and have a wide circle of friends.

I would like to stay at home while I am studying to become a paramedic.

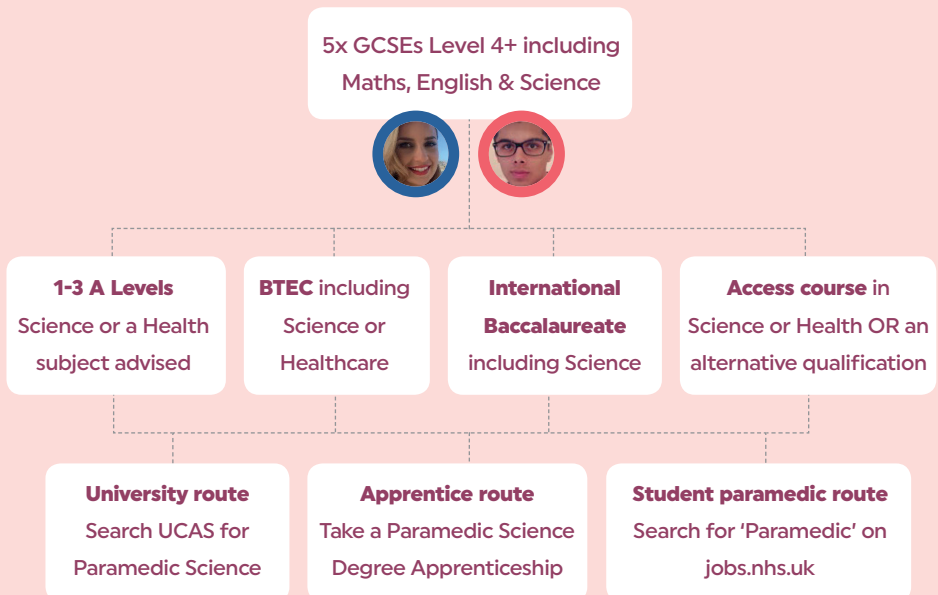
OLIVER

I am doing BTECs in Applied Science and Applied Psychology.

I am a kinaesthetic learner – I learn best by doing.

I grew up in the countryside with a few close friends.

I would like to move away from home to become a paramedic.



MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS



Apprentices are there to make the tea and coffee

There are all sorts of misconceptions lingering around from the past. Some people think that apprentices are there to make the tea and coffee. This is certainly not true. Employers are investing a lot of time and money into you as an apprentice, as they usually intend to employ you when you become qualified. It's an investment for the company and not an attempt at getting cheap labour.

Apprenticeships are for people who have failed their A-levels

This isn't true, although in some cases it is possible to start some apprenticeships without A-levels. Most employers prefer 5 GCSEs, including maths and English (A*-C or 9 - 4 on the new grading system).

Apprenticeships are just for jobs in construction

Although you can undertake a variety of apprenticeships in the construction industry, employers are offering higher and degree apprenticeships in areas such as management, IT, retail, and many many more.

Wouldn't I be better off just getting a job?

Possibly in the very short term, but, gaining a higher education qualification is an investment in your future and it's highly likely that it will lead to earning more money in the long-term, with better career opportunities and job satisfaction.

QUIZ

1. What is the lowest level of study to be considered a higher apprenticeship?

2 3 4 5

2. What level does a degree apprenticeship start at?

4 5 6 7

3. What percentage of the working week does an apprentice spend studying?

5% 10% 15% 20%

4. What is the minimum hourly wage for apprentices?

£2.90 £3.90 £4.90 £5.90

5. What is the minimum duration of an apprenticeship?

1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years

6. What is the highest level of apprenticeship currently available?

5 6 7 8

7. When should you start looking and applying for an apprenticeship?

January May December Continuously

8. What percentage of apprentices stay in employment after their apprenticeship?

75% 80% 85% 90%

ACTIVITY: YOUR RESEARCH

There are many different types of apprenticeships which suit a wide range of people and interests. Use the space below to jot down some information about vacancies you have researched.

Vacancy 1

Job title:

Salary:

Location:

Main responsibilities:

Extra notes:

Vacancy 2

Job title:

Salary:

Location:

Main responsibilities:

Extra notes:

Vacancy 3

Job title:

Salary:

Location:

Main responsibilities:

Extra notes:

Vacancy 4

Job title:

Salary:

Location:

Main responsibilities:

Extra notes:

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
A-level	Advanced level subject-based qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. Students aged 16-18 in the UK will usually study three or more A-levels over two years, ending with a series of examinations.
Bachelor's	An undergraduate degree that usually takes three years of full time study to complete. The term is commonly abbreviated alongside the subject specialism, for instance 'BA' means 'Bachelor of the Arts', whilst 'BSc' means 'Bachelor of Science'.
BTEC	BTEC stands for 'Business and Technology Education Council'. They are vocational qualifications that provide specialist, work-related learning in a range of career sectors. BTEC's can be studied at Level 2 or 3 alongside other awards (e.g. GCSEs and A-levels) or stand alone.
Bursary	A form of financial support that universities and colleges may offer to students who meet a set of criteria (e.g. low-income background and care leavers).
College	A provider of further (FE) and higher education (HE) for students aged 16 and over. Colleges offer practical courses such as diplomas and foundation degrees, often leading to a one-year top-up course to earn a full degree.
Cover letter	A letter sent with your CV to provide additional details about your skills and experience.
Curriculum Vitae (CV)	A short written description of your education, qualifications, previous jobs, and sometimes also your personal interests, that you send to an employer when you are trying to get a job.
Degree Apprenticeship	An apprenticeship that leads to a full bachelors or masters degree at level 6 or 7.
End-point assessment	The name of the assessment at the end of a standards-style apprenticeship.
Foundation Degree	A combined academic and vocational qualification, equivalent to two thirds of a bachelor's degree.
GCSEs	A General Certificate of Secondary Education is the first qualification UK students gain around the age of 16. Subject options are usually selected in year 9 (e.g. art and design, humanities, and foreign languages) alongside compulsory subjects (e.g. English, maths and science), with exams taking place after two years.
Higher Apprenticeship	An apprenticeship at level 4 or above. Apprentices work towards a higher education qualification (HNC, HND etc.).

Higher Education	Optional final level of study after further education (level 3 qualifications).
Higher Education Institution (HEI)	A training provider, usually a university. However, it can also refer to an institution conducted by a higher education corporation.
Higher National Certificate (HNC)	The Higher National Certificate is a vocational course that takes one year to complete. It is roughly equivalent to one year of university study.
Higher National Diploma (HND)	The Higher National Diploma is a vocational course that takes roughly two years to complete. It is equal to approximately two years of a three-year Bachelor's degree, and can often be used to gain entry to a university course.
Lecture	An educational talk delivered to students at university.
Master's	A Master's degree (MA, MSc, MBA) is a level 7 qualification that can only be applied for after completing a bachelor's degree. Study is intense and typically involves completing a series of modules and writing a dissertation.
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications recognise the practical skills and knowledge required to gain employment in a specific job sector. Learning may take place in school, college or the workplace, with a task-based style of final assessment. There are five levels, ranging in equivalence from GCSE up to HE diplomas and foundation degrees.
Post-16	Further education for students aged 16 and over, which usually takes place in a school sixth form or college. This includes A Levels, vocational training and work-based learning such as Level 3 advanced apprenticeships.
Post-18	Higher education available to students aged 18 and over. Learning may take place on a university campus, at college or in industry. This includes undergraduate degrees, higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships.
Profession	A paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification.
Qualification	An official record to evidence that you have completed a training course or study programme.
Standards	The newer style of apprenticeships. In a standard apprenticeship, apprentices undergo a single assessment when they and their employer agree that they are ready.
Student Loan	A borrowed sum of money to cover the cost of going to university or college. Two loans are currently available: a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan. Applications are made through Student Finance England.
UCAS	The University and Colleges Admissions Service. The centralised service that students use to apply to university.
Undergraduate	A university student who has not yet completed their degree. It can also be used as another word for a bachelor's degree.
University	An institution that provides higher education (e.g. undergraduate and postgraduate courses).

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact our friendly team.



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Join the conversation



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**Next Steps
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