



## Professional Pathways: Frequently asked questions



If your question is not answered below, please get in touch with your school or email:  
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## Part 1: What is Professional Pathways?

### 1. What would a typical week on Professional Pathways be like?

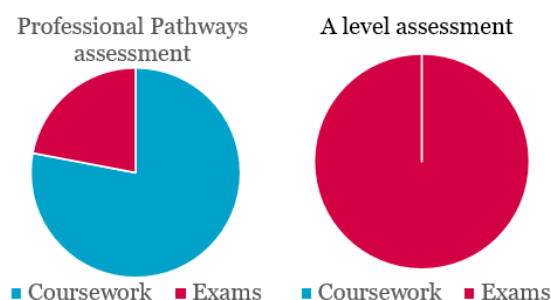
A typical week on Professional Pathways varies from school to school. Generally, you will have about **15 periods dedicated to your qualification**. In this time, you may be focussing on one module/ topic at a time or splitting your focus between more than one. You are likely to have more than one teacher for your qualification. You will also **visit or work with top employers** who will help enhance your learning.

Once a week, you will have a **Work Readiness or Personal Development Time lesson** in which you will develop essential skills to help you succeed at school and beyond. Topics you will cover in these lessons include: financial literacy, creating competitive job applications, choosing your post sixth form options. Twice a year, you will attend a **Student Conference** with Professional Pathways students from other Ark schools to develop your skills, networks and experiences beyond your qualification. These will often take place at top universities or employers.

As a member of the sixth form, you will also partake in normal sixth form activities such as enrichment (these vary by school).

## 2. What are the differences between A levels and Professional Pathways?

**Assessment:** The qualification taught as part of Professional Pathways is a Level 3 qualification (usually a **BTEC or similar qualification**) which is equivalent to A levels. Whereas A levels are usually assessed 100% through exams, qualifications taught in Professional Pathways are **assessed through both coursework (usually around 60%) and exams (usually around 40%)**.



**More than a just qualification:** Unlike A levels, Professional Pathways is a **programme** which includes more than just a qualification. Unlike A levels (which are qualifications only) this programme includes a unique curriculum of lessons and trips to help you develop your skills, networks and experiences beyond your qualification.

**Become a specialist:** Finally, Professional Pathways students will choose one subject to specialise in during their course, unlike A level students who will usually study 3 separate subjects. Although they study a range of modules and topics, this allows students to focus on one subject and become a specialist in that area.

## 3. How is doing Professional Pathways different than doing a course at college?

Professional Pathways is a programme **unique to Ark schools**- you will not find it at other sixth forms or colleges. Although other schools and colleges will offer similar qualifications, they will not offer the **unique curriculum of wrap around lessons, events and partner support** which is available as part of Professional Pathways.

## 4. Will I be able to do an A-level alongside Professional Pathways?

Professional Pathways courses are usually **equivalent to 3 A levels** - there is no need for you to take any extra qualifications. If you do want to study an A level alongside Professional Pathways, you should speak to your school's Head of Sixth Form about this.

## 5. How are Professional Pathway courses graded?

Professional Pathways qualifications are **assessed through both coursework (usually around 60%) and exams (usually around 40%)**. Available grades are Distinction star (D\*), Distinction (D), Merit (M), Pass (P) or fail.

## 6. Are the qualifications in Professional Pathways easier than A levels?

Professional Pathways is **not an easier option** than A levels. The difference in assessment method (see Q5) means that students who struggle with exams will find they can achieve higher grades through coursework-based assessments. This continuous style of assessment means that students need to **work hard throughout the 2-year course** to achieve a good grade.

## 7. Why are the entry requirements for Professional Pathways lower than for A levels?

Entry requirements for Professional Pathways are usually grades **4+ in GCSEs including English and maths** (speak to your school for details).

We appreciate that not all students show their true intelligence and effort through exams and therefore GCSE grades are not always reflective of a student's ability. A-Level entry requirements are usually high to ensure students taking these courses are well suited to an

exam-based course. Students with GCSE grades of 4-6 often find they can achieve much higher equivalent grades through coursework-based Professional Pathways than exam-based A levels. Entry requirements are designed to reflect this.

### 8. What if I don't get a grade 4 in English and/or maths GCSE?

Depending on your school and your grade, there may be an option to continue to study these subjects alongside Professional Pathways. Ask your school for details.

### 9. Why do you offer courses in Applied Science, Business, IT and Sport and Exercise?

The subject you can study as part of Professional Pathways varies by school. These four subjects have been chosen specifically for 2 key reasons:

- They are **broad qualifications connected to growing job sectors**. This means you will have a huge range of options moving forward into higher education and your career.
- **Teachers in the Ark network are experts** in these subjects. This means we can provide amazing teaching and help you secure the best possible grades in these subjects.

## Part 2: What can I do after Professional Pathways?

### 10. Is it true that I can't get into university unless I do A levels?

**No.** Universities recognise Professional Pathways qualifications and accept students who did these courses. Students who take Professional Pathways progress to top 3<sup>rd</sup> and Russell Group universities.

**Competitive apprenticeships** also accept Professional Pathways qualifications. Ark has a unique apprenticeship programme to support students interested in this pathway.

### 11. Which university courses can I do after Professional Pathways?

Most students will go on to study a degree similar to their Professional Pathways subject. It is possible, however, to study something else. In some cases, this might mean taking a 'Foundation Year' at the start of your course.

There are a few courses which still only accept very high A level grades, such as Medicine and Law. There are, however, associated pathways and courses which Professional Pathways can access if they are interested in these careers. Throughout your course, you will be given help and advice to find a post-sixth form option which is right for you.

If you have a post-sixth form pathway in mind already, you may want to check the entry requirements and / or speak to your school's careers advisor about this.

### 12. Which careers can I get into after Professional Pathways?

There are a huge range of careers open to you after Professional Pathways- have a look at the course overviews for some ideas. Students may choose to go straight into their career through an apprenticeship after their course or go to university first. **Throughout the course, students will have support and guidance to explore their career goals and post sixth form options.**