

UNI PREP PATHWAYS · FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS · EDITION 1 · 2026-27

Your pathway guide

Academic, professional or vocational: what comes after school, how long each pathway takes, and what to study now.



Academic

3–4 years after school



Professional

4–8 years after school



Vocational

Under 1 to 3 years after school

START HERE

How to use this guide

Read it together. It explains the three pathways, shows twelve career families and what each career needs, and ends with a page to fill in as a family.

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Career sheets, one per family	online

Pathways connect. A vocational diploma can lead on to a degree, and a degree can lead on to a licence. Choosing one now does not close the others.

FOR PARENTS

Five ways to help

1. **Ask what they enjoy**
   Interests last longer than salaries. Start with the subjects and activities your child likes.

2. **Check subjects early**
   Some careers need Biology, Chemistry or Physics. Choose them while there is still time.

3. **Treat every pathway as equal**
   Vocational routes lead to good jobs, and many lead on to a degree later.

4. **Look at English early**
   Most universities ask for an IELTS score. Uni Prep shows the usual band for each career.

5. **Revisit it every year**
   Changing your mind is normal. The goal can be changed at any time in the app.

THE THREE PATHWAYS

Three ways to a career



Academic

A university degree that builds deep knowledge of a subject.

Qualification	Bachelor's, then a master's or doctorate if you want
Time after school	3–4 years
Licence	Usually not
Where you study	University
Good if	You enjoy ideas, reading, research and exams.
Examples	Economist, data scientist, historian, biomedical scientist



Professional

A degree plus a licence to work in a regulated job.

Qualification	Professional degree, then a licence or registration
Time after school	4–8 years
Licence	Yes: bar exam, medical licence, engineering registration
Where you study	University, then supervised training
Good if	You want a clear career with responsibility for people's health, safety or rights.
Examples	Doctor, lawyer, engineer, pharmacist, architect



Vocational

Hands-on training for a specific job, often with work placements.

Qualification	Certificate, diploma or higher diploma (for example BTEC); you can top up to a degree later
Time after school	Under 1 to 3 years
Licence	Sometimes: EMT certification, electrician licence
Where you study	College, training centre or apprenticeship
Good if	You learn by doing and want to start work sooner.
Examples	EMT, electrician, chef, IT technician

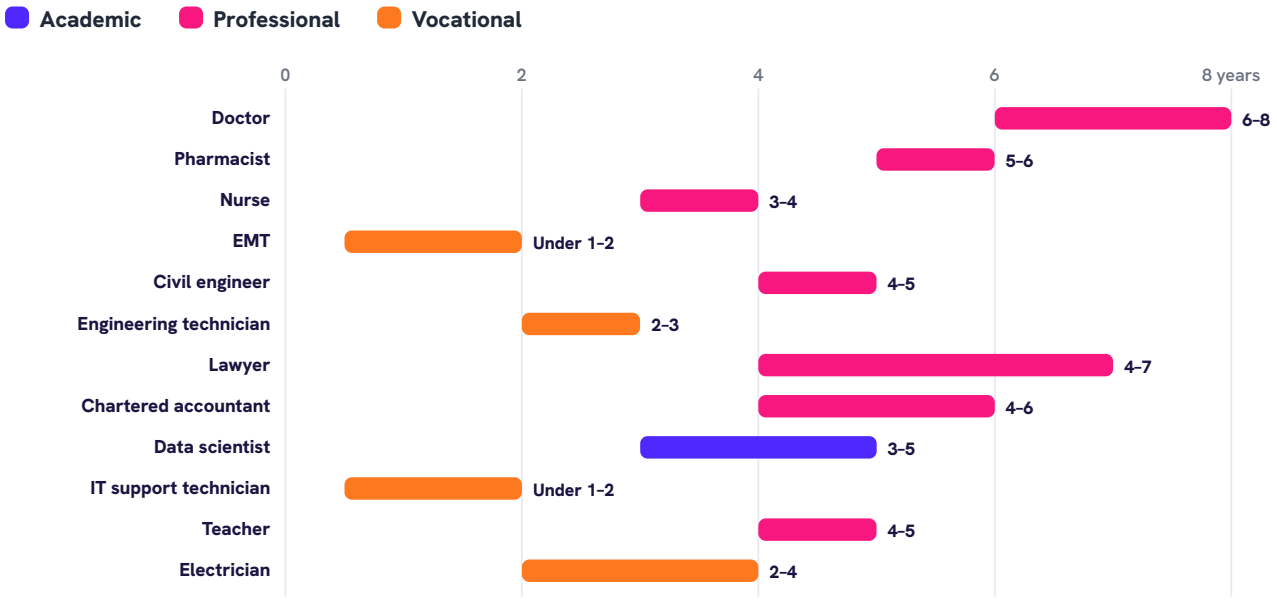
COMPARE AT A GLANCE

Side by side

	Academic	Professional	Vocational
What you get	Bachelor's, then a master's or doctorate if you want	Professional degree, then a licence or registration	Certificate, diploma or higher diploma (for example BTEC); you can top up to a degree later
Time after school	3–4 years	4–8 years	Under 1 to 3 years
Licence	Usually not	Yes: bar exam, medical licence, engineering registration	Sometimes: EMT certification, electrician licence
Where	University	University, then supervised training	College, training centre or apprenticeship
Good if	You enjoy ideas, reading, research and exams.	You want a clear career with responsibility for people's health, safety or rights.	You learn by doing and want to start work sooner.

How long it takes

Years from leaving school to the first qualified job, typical range, for twelve example careers

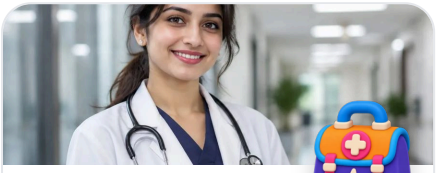


Figures are typical ranges and vary by country and university. Always check entry rules with each university or college.

TWELVE CAREER FAMILIES

Pick a family, then a career

Each family has its own two-page career sheet, with the subjects, years, licence and English level for every career.



Health & medicine

Doctor, Dentist, Pharmacist, Nurse...

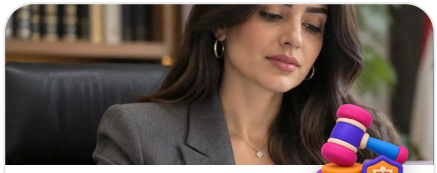
Academic · Professional · Vocational



Engineering

Civil engineer, Mechanical engineer, Electrical engineer, Petroleum engineer...

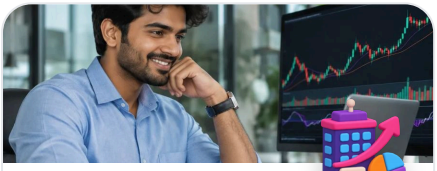
Academic · Professional · Vocational



Law & public service

Lawyer, Diplomat, Political scientist, Criminologist...

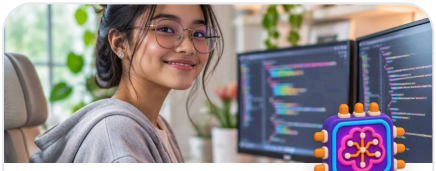
Academic · Professional · Vocational



Business & finance

Chartered accountant, Actuary, Economist, Accounting technician...

Academic · Professional · Vocational



Computing & AI

Computer scientist, Data scientist, Cybersecurity specialist, IT support technician...

Academic · Professional · Vocational



Science & research

Chemist, Biologist, Clinical psychologist, Lab technician

Academic · Professional · Vocational



Education

Teacher, Education researcher, Teaching assistant, Early-years educator

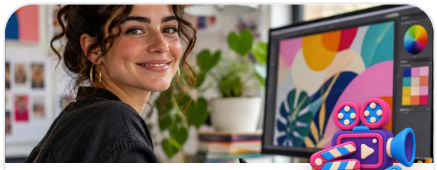
Academic · Professional · Vocational



Architecture & building

Architect, Quantity surveyor, Urban planner, Site supervisor...

Academic · Professional · Vocational



Creative arts & media

Journalist, Art historian, Graphic designer, Animator...

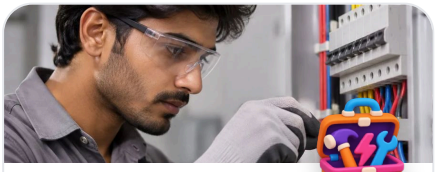
Academic · Vocational



Hospitality, tourism & aviation

Airline pilot, Tourism manager, Chef, Cabin crew...

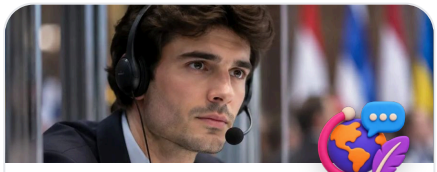
Academic · Professional · Vocational



Skilled trades & energy

Electrician, HVAC technician, Welder, Plant operator

Vocational



Languages & humanities

Linguist, Historian, Translator, Interpreter

Academic · Vocational

CHOOSING TOGETHER · FILL IN

Our pathway plan

Fill this in together, then set the goal in Uni Prep so lessons and advice follow it.

The pathway we are leaning towards

- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Professional
- ☐ Vocational

Career family and career

_____

1. Three school subjects I enjoy most

2. What I like doing outside school

3. Do I prefer working with people, ideas, things or data?

4. Careers we looked at together

5. Subjects I need to take next year

6. Our next step, and when we will talk again

YOUR NEXT STEPS

From guide to plan

1. **Set your goal**
   In Uni Prep, open Pathways and choose "Make this my goal". It is optional, and you can change it at any time.

2. **Not sure yet? Explore**
   Read the career sheet for each family that interests you, together with your family.

3. **Check your subjects**
   Your goal shows which subjects you need and which ones you have started.

4. **Watch your three checks**
   Subjects, grades and English: Uni Prep shows whether you are on track.

Scan for the latest version

uni-prep.org/pathways has every career sheet and this guide in its newest edition.

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