How to get into the Information Technology Industry

Choosing GSCEs
- Maths grade B may be a prerequisite for some course/employment options
- English Language is required
- ICT may be required but not essential

Achieving GCSEs or equivalent, the next step, choosing Level 3 Routes
- A Levels – any subjects but Maths is a preferred
- BTEC Diploma (1.5 A Levels) in a range of subjects including: Broad based IT, Games Development, Creative Media Production, Software Development. Networking and IT Infrastructure
- BTEC Extended Diploma (3 A Levels) subjects as above
- OCR Level 2 diploma in IT

Access route for those who have been out of full-time education for a minimum of 2 years
- Access Diploma in specialist subjects such as Maths and Computing; Computing, Business and Multimedia

Post 'A' Levels and other Level 3 Qualifications
- Full Time Degree in IT related subject
- Part Time Degree Course in IT Related subject
- Foundation degree/HND in IT related subject
- Higher Level Apprenticeship in IT subject
- Level 3 apprenticeship
- Employer sponsored Degrees and Employment Programmes

Post Degree
- Graduate employment from IT and non IT related Degrees
- Master's conversion course in IT subject
- Master's degree in an IT related subject
- IT related Academy
- Graduate Traineeship
- Professional qualifications at an FE College

Some specific examples of note include:

Higher Level Apprenticeships
Higher Level Apprenticeships allow people to gain a Foundation Degree programme while at the same time being employed by a company. They spend one day at College and get paid to work in the company for the other four days working in a company. This programme allows students to start their career without the student debt associated with this Foundation Degree. They are advertised by companies wishing to recruit an apprentice and the employers apply for a place on the course for the Foundation Degree.

Academies
Another option for graduates of any subject is Academies. Further education Colleges in conjunction with the Department for the Economy and Invest Northern Ireland have, since August 2013, successfully delivered over 30 Academies under the Assured Skills Programme. This award winning suite of programmes provides an unskilled workforce within Northern Ireland which facilitates new inward investors, and provides existing employers with the human resource to enable business expansion and growth. Topics covered have included Cyber Security, Data Analytics, Power BI, Software Development and Software Testing.

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Career Opportunities in Information Technology

Students Guide

Reasons to consider a career in IT

Salaries are higher

The salary for someone working in IT in Northern Ireland is on average 61 % higher than other industries and the average salary for a programmer is £40,519. The average salary in Northern Ireland is £24,601.

There are lots of jobs available and this is continuing to grow

There is currently a demand for a range of IT related jobs in Northern Ireland at the moment. This trend is forecasted to continue in the future and it has grown by 32% in the last five years.

Thrive as part of a team

IT careers typically require you to work as part of a team of enthusiastic likeminded people who share ideas and help to develop each other's skills.

Relaxed and informal working environment

Many IT industry employers provide informal working environments which are designed to make employees feel motivated and comfortable and help them to get the best from themselves.

Opportunity to work in many different industries

A career in IT will typically provide the opportunity to work on projects from a range of different industries thus providing a varied and exciting working experience.

Many different career paths

The IT industry offers many different roles and career paths which appeal to a wide range of skills and interests from coding to graphic design to IT consulting.

Enjoy the opportunities to keep learning

The IT industry changes at a rapid pace and therefore employees in the sector are continuously learning and developing. Employers in the industry are therefore committed to provide ongoing learning opportunities for their employees.

Explore your creative side

Many jobs within IT require employees to be creative and come up with new ideas and new ways of working and new products and services. It is a fantastic industry to maximise your creative side.