

Choosing GCSE Options: Teacher Pack

inspiring
the
future

Activities and ready-to-go resources
to help students understand
why what they do now matters.



inspiringthefuture.org

Using real-world insights to inform options discussions



For many students GCSE options are the first real chance to make choices about their education pathways.

Decisions are shaped by a variety of factors and influences, but it is sometimes difficult for young people to look beyond their immediate experiences.

Hearing from workplace volunteers encourages students to consider the wider implications of their choices, see the value of subjects from an employment perspective, and to reflect and engage with the possibilities of their lives ahead.

And employer encounters benefit subject learning too, boosting motivation and attainment.

This teacher pack combines practical resources with ideas on using real-life insights from workplace volunteers to support students' option choices.

“We often hear students question the validity of certain subjects...I felt that students would value the opinions of professionals that they may aspire to be like.”

Mark Anderson, careers advisor

Activities and resources using workplace volunteer insights



Me and my GCSEs: selected quotes

Inspiring The Future volunteers explain how GCSE subject choices have helped shaped their careers.

Use in your school option packs or as a starting point for discussion with students.

[See quotes \(pages 5-6\).](#)

Create a virtual or in-person event at your school with workplace volunteers, with a focus on option choice subjects

Consider inviting a selection of volunteers to provide insights into a particular subject or invite a range of volunteers to talk about how they use different subjects in their job.

This could be an assembly talk, classroom visit or activity with small groups, either in-person or virtually.

Think laterally to help challenge student preconceptions – why not invite someone who uses technology in a theatre production crew or uses business studies but works in fashion?

- [Sign-up](#) or [log in](#) to Inspiring The Future to access our volunteer network.
- See our [guide to searching for subject volunteers](#) (page 8) with Inspiring The Future.
- Use this [template invitation](#) (page 7) to invite volunteers to take part in your GCSE options activity.
- Use this [lesson plan and student worksheet](#) (pages 9-10) to help shape your volunteer event.

Ready-to-go student resources

Our student-facing site, icould.com, has a range of resources to help with options choices. These can be used on a standalone basis or to support student learning before and after encounters with workplace volunteers.

Visit [icould's GCSE options](#) section to see the resources below or follow the individual links:

- [Choosing your GCSE options](#) (short written guide). Key points for students to consider when it comes to making subject choices.
- [Choosing your GCSE options](#) (video, 3 mins). This video features people in work reflecting on their GCSE options. Use to start discussions about what factors influence choices and how decisions can shape students' future pathways.
- [Can't decide? Tactics for making decisions](#) (article). Different methods and approaches to help students reach decisions.
- [Choosing well: how to pick the right path for you](#) (article). How to work out what's best when making the next move.

- [Why choose geography?](#) and [Why choose history?](#) (articles with links to career videos). Help students understand the benefits of studying geography and history and explore real-life examples of related careers.

And you can also [explore real-life career videos by school subject](#) to discover links between subjects and careers.



Me and My GCSEs: Inspiring The Future volunteers explain how GCSE choices have helped shape their careers



Use these quotes in your school option packs/information or as a starting point for discussion with students.

[See copy and paste versions of quotes.](#)

Drama

“Strangely you don’t realise how many skills Drama helps you develop. Working on a play helped me understand how to manage my time and deliver on short term projects. Directing helped me communicate my ideas to a variety of people wanting to achieve the same goal and performance helped me understand how to best present myself to an audience for sales pitches and public speaking opportunities. Above all drama helped me hone my creativity skills which are becoming more and more desired by employers.”

Employer Relationship Manager

History

“History is a great choice for someone who is interested in a career in law and particularly, a career as a barrister. You will learn how to examine different types of sources, including. For example, pictures, newspaper articles from the time, or books and to discuss which are the most persuasive as a record of what happened in the past. You will use that skill as a lawyer when you are looking at evidence and developing arguments about which pieces of evidence are most important and what those pieces of evidence tell you and the Court about what happened.”

Lawyer

IT

“I get legal protection for the inventions our engineers come up with so that other companies have to pay us when they want to use our inventions. I use my GCSE IT a lot at work. Like most office jobs, my job involves using word processing, internet searching, spreadsheet, database and presentation software. I also often need to know about how computer systems work so I can understand inventions which involve them.”

Senior Patent Attorney

Geography

“You can gain lots of transferable skills through studying Geography such as research skills, data analysis and team work. It’s important to be aware of what is going on in the world around you as this impacts on businesses and the economy. Understanding people and cultural differences is relevant to a role like marketing where we need to understand our customers’ demographics and needs.”

Marketing Manager

RE

“Religious Education is a helpful subject to study if you want to become a lawyer. The religious education course requires you to understand how religious teachings affect human behaviour and you will discuss how some teachings are open to different interpretations. Similarly, as a lawyer, you have to understand how the law is intended to affect human behaviour to be able to decide whether someone has broken the law. You will also argue about what the law is or means. When doing this you will be able to use the skills you learn from debating what different religious teachings mean.”

Lawyer

Balance of subjects

"I do draw upon transferable skills I gained at school every single day in my working life, but one subject doesn't give me more of an advantage than another."

HR Business Manager

Design Technology

“Design Technology and Design Technology Communications [Technical Drawing] played a big part in my development, going into A Levels from GCSE and then onto university where I studied Architectural Technology. Creating working drawings that interface with our systems and buildings plays a big part in our industry and my current role.”

Training Manager

[Sign-up](#) or [log in](#) to access our national network of workplace volunteers and invite them to take part in activities in your school.

Creating a virtual or in-person event at your school with workplace volunteers: searching for subject volunteers



Steps to create your activity

To create your first employer encounter, log in and:

1. Click 'Manage Opportunities' and 'Create New Opportunity & Invite'
2. Complete the various fields, including whether your employer encounter is virtual or in-person
3. Write a detailed description – make this as detailed and engaging as possible (see our template description)
4. Go to 'Save & Find Volunteers' to invite volunteers.

Template invitation to volunteers to take part in a school GCSE options activity

[See copy and paste version of invitation text](#) and tailor to suit your needs.

Hello, we are looking for X volunteers with [jobs roles/experience/background] for our virtual/in-person employer encounter on [date] and [time]. Please read details below and get in touch with any questions.

- Aim - We are looking to inspire our students with role models from all sectors, to draw links between [X subject] and careers to help them with their GCSE option choices.
- Who - This will be with [X many] Year X students, across X different classrooms. Teachers in those classrooms will be managing the session.
- What - We look to hold an interactive question and answer session for half an hour, where you will initially introduce your job role for the first 5 minutes, followed by 25 minutes of the students' questions. We'd like you to share some slides with images to demonstrate your career pathway and how you use [X subject] in your role.
- Where - We are looking to use Microsoft Teams, and wish to conduct a briefing meeting before the session. If you have never used it before, don't worry as the test meeting will be a good opportunity to check you are confident in using the platform and to ask questions.
- Next steps - Please respond to this invite by selecting 'Accept' and we will get in touch to arrange a briefing meeting. Thank you, we look forward to hearing from you.

How to search and invite volunteers:

Log in and:

1. Click 'Search for volunteers'
 2. Use the filters on the left-hand side to find role models from different sectors and backgrounds:
 - Use the subject filter to find volunteers that link to curriculum subjects OR
 - Use the Job Title filter to search for specific job roles (see examples below).
 3. Click 'Search' and use the 'List' view to see volunteers' names and profiles
 3. Add volunteers to your shortlist - start by inviting 4 x the amount of volunteers you need
 4. Go to 'Attach to Existing Opportunity' and follow the prompts to invite your volunteers.
- Invite volunteers now.

Subjects job titles

Try searching the below job titles to find volunteer with jobs related to subjects:

- IT – software engineer, solutions architect
- History – conservator
- Geography – 'geo phys' (related to geophysicist)
- PE – physiotherapist; sports development officer
- MFL – translator; interpreter
- Art – designer; UX designer
- Music – musician; sound technician; theatre producer
- Media Studies – producer
- Drama – stage manager; learning and development manager

Or use the 'Subjects' search filter and look for job roles with less obvious subject connections.

Career Insights Guide: lesson plan

A Career Insights encounter involves a volunteer initially speaking about their career, followed by some Q&A for students to learn more about their role and career pathway. You might like to focus on a particular sector/ subject or invite a range of employers. This can be used to meet Gatsby Benchmark 5: Encounters with employers and employees and Gatsby Benchmark 4: Linking curriculum learning to careers.

Activity Name: Career Insights. Learning Objectives:		Date/Time/Class:	Volunteers required:	Theme/Sector Focus:
Outline			Timing	Notes
Set up:				Resources:
- On the Inspiring the Future network, create your activity and invite volunteers. - Brief volunteers on the format and purpose of the activity. You might them to bring in props or prepare a short PowerPoint presentation to accompany their talk. - Prepare students by asking them to think about questions they might want to ask volunteers (see template on page 2 + 3).				- Student Worksheet (page 2 + 3) - Laptop + Projector
Introduction:				Key questions:
- Introduce volunteers to students. Ask volunteers to share their job, what they most enjoy about being a ____/ what inspired them to become a ____. - Ask students to share one thing they'd like to learn about today/ job roles or keywords they associate with _____ sector/ subject.				
Activity:				Differentiation:
- The first volunteer shares their job role, educational pathway and the skills/subjects that are important in their role for 5-10 minutes, followed by open Q&A with the students for another 5-20 minutes. - Repeat for the next volunteer as necessary.				
Plenary:				Additional notes:
- Share student reflections with volunteers: What did they learn? What surprised them? What next steps can they take? See our Plenary Options resource for further reflection ideas. - Volunteers share one final piece of advice to leave the young people with. - Thank volunteers after the activity. You could ask students to contribute to this. - Encourage students to explore career videos related to your volunteers' jobs on our student-facing site, icould.com.				

Student Q&A Worksheet

Prepare questions you would like to ask the volunteers. Fill in the blank question boxes below and make notes as each volunteer is speaking.

Possible questions	Volunteer 1	Volunteer 2
1.What responsibilities/tasks does this job entail?		
2.What subjects did you study at school that were particularly helpful and why?		
3.What skills are important for this job?		
4.What does a typical day/week look like for you?		
5.What is your favourite thing and most challenging thing about your role?		
ADD YOUR OWN QUESTION(S)		