



NI Traineeship Prospectus



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WHAT IS A LEVEL 2 NI TRAINEESHIP?

An NI Traineeship is a programme designed to help learners prepare for a career in an area that interests them. It combines practical, hands-on work experience within a chosen industry with the development of the personal and employability skills valued by employers. Learners who do not hold a GCSE grade C or above in English and Maths will also be able to improve their English and Maths grades.

The NI Traineeship is available to school leavers and adults who wish to develop the skills, knowledge, and qualifications needed to work in a specific sector. Each Traineeship is designed in partnership with employers to ensure that the learning and skills gained reflect current industry needs. Completion of an NI Traineeship can lead directly to employment, a level 2 Apprenticeship or provide progression opportunities to a level 3 apprenticeship or further education at level 3.

How long will a Traineeship take to complete?

NI Traineeships typically take one or two years to complete on a full-time basis, depending on the subject chosen.

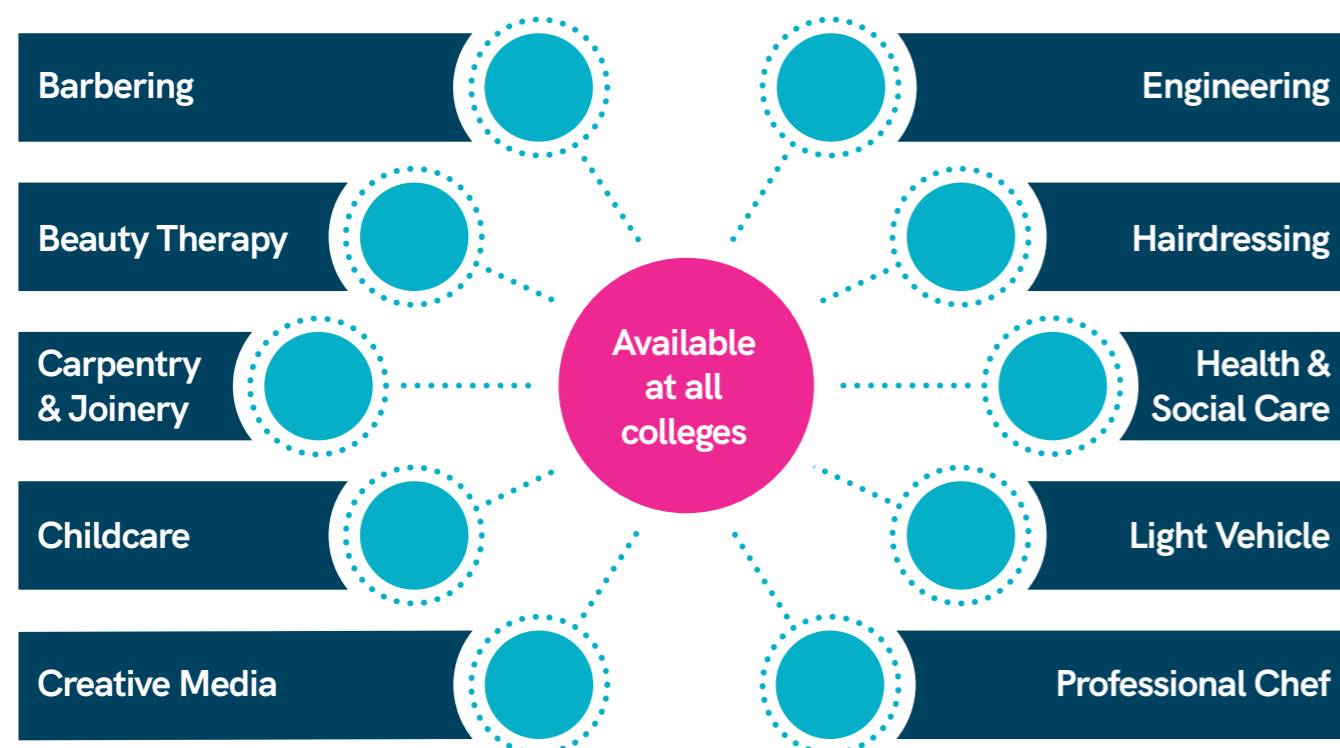
What will I learn and experience?

An NI Traineeship includes the following key elements:

- A professional and technical qualification in a career area that you are interested in
- Skills development, including digital skills
- Important transferable and employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving and time management
- A mandatory work placement
- Literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2, which may include GCSE English and Mathematics
- Additional sector-specific qualifications, such as Health and Safety, CSR, or Manual Handling
- Project-based learning, which encourages active participation, deeper subject knowledge, and the development of practical, hands-on skills.

What Traineeship subjects are available?

The core subjects below are available across all NI colleges. In addition to these core subjects, individual colleges also offer other specialised traineeship programmes linked to local industry need. All subjects offered are shown in the table.



Subject Area						
Barbering	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Beauty Therapy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carpentry & Joinery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Childcare	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creative Media	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engineering	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hairdressing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health & Social Care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Light Vehicle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional Chef	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Animal Care	✓	✓		✓		
Art & Design	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bakery	✓			✓		
Brickwork	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Business Admin		✓	✓		✓	✓
Business Studies	✓			✓		
Cabin Crew & Ground operations	✓					
Construction Studies				✓		
Electrical Installation				✓		
Floor & Wall Tiling			✓	✓	✓	✓
Hair & Media Make-Up	✓			✓		
Heavy Vehicle				✓		✓
Hospitality	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
IT	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Land-Based Engineering				✓		✓
Music, Performing Arts, Art, Media	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Nail Technology	✓					
Plant Maintenance				✓		✓
Plastering & Dry Wall Lining				✓		✓
Plumbing	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Retail				✓		✓
Science	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sport			✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel & Tourism	✓			✓		
Vehicle Body Repair			✓		✓	
Vehicle Paint Refinishing					✓	

What qualifications do I need to apply?

Applicants are required to achieve a minimum of a level 1 qualification which is defined as 4 GCSEs at grades D-G including Maths and English grades D-F (or equivalent). Enhanced entry grades for maths and English apply in certain subject areas. Enhanced entry grades will be listed on the individual subject pages on each of the College's websites.

Will I get work experience?

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a key part of every NI Traineeship. It helps learners develop practical skills, build confidence, and gain real insight into their chosen career. This is unpaid work experience.

Minimum Work Experience Hours

To complete the Traineeship, learners must complete a set number of Work-Based Learning hours. These hours are timetabled as part of the programme. They are determined by the length of the Traineeship and the qualification.

Traineeship Length	Min Work Experience Hours (Diploma)	Min Work Experience Hours (Certificate)
2 years	120 hrs	100 hrs
1 year	60 hrs	50 hrs

Progress reviews are carried out throughout the programme following the sector's Work-Based Learning procedures.

How Work Experience Is Delivered

Colleges have flexibility in how and when WBL is organised, and each vocational area may deliver it differently. You will be supported in sourcing the correct placement opportunity to meet the requirements of your course. Colleges will work with local employers to provide suitable placements that will ensure you gain appropriate experience and support.

Work experience may take place in one of the following ways:

1. Workplace Placement (Off-Campus)

Learners may attend a real employer's workplace to complete their placement. A learner who already has a part-time job within a suitable sector may be able to use this as their placement following college checks and employer agreement. If a learner does not have a suitable placement the college will help them find one. Learners will be supported fully by a key college placement contact who will also complete documentation, review progress and record attendance.

2. Realistic Working Environments (RWE) (On Campus)

Some trainees complete their work experience in college-run commercial environments such as:

- Hair & Beauty Salons
- Training Restaurants
- Workshops or Studios

These settings operate like real businesses. Time spent here counts as WBL and includes formal progress reviews and attendance monitoring.

3. Simulated Placement

Some sectors cannot always provide live industry placements. In these cases, trainees complete an employer-designed project or simulation. This approach:

- Reflects real job tasks
- Develops industry-specific skills
- May connect to enterprise or competition activities

Tracking and Documentation

All WBL activity will be managed by each college's work placement team. Colleges will provide all required insurance, documentation and guidance to the placement provider and learner. Progress reviews will be completed for every learner with the placement provider. College teams will also support the learner if they gain an apprenticeship during the Traineeship or require another placement. Full support, insurance and monitoring is carried out by the college.

Name:
Aaron Foy
Subject:
Carpentry & Joinery
College:
Southern Regional
College



Aaron chose to come to College after completing his GCSEs at St Ronan's College Lurgan, because he wanted to learn in a more practical, hands-on environment. Having taken Carpentry & Joinery as part of his GCSEs, continuing with the subject felt like the right step. It gave him the chance to build on something he already had an interest in and develop real skills that could lead directly into a trade.

Aaron speaks about how he is enjoying the course: "There's a far greater sense of freedom at College compared to school. You're treated more like an adult, with more responsibility and independence and that makes the whole experience much more enjoyable. I've developed a good range of practical joinery skills, along with a much better understanding of the measurements and maths involved in the trade. These are the kinds of skills I now use every time I'm in the workshop, whether it's setting out a frame, cutting materials, or fitting parts so they align properly".

Once he completes his Traineeship, Jack plans to move onto the apprenticeship programme in Carpentry & Joinery with a longer-term vision of setting up his own business in the industry.

How will I be assessed?

Each professional and technical area will have an assessment process to meet the qualifications' awarding body requirements; so, all will be slightly different.

Most subjects' assessment is continuous which means you may not have any overall final end exams. You may have to build a portfolio of work that will allow you to see your progress and target set for achievement throughout.

How your course is assessed will be discussed with you once you apply and attend pre-entry information sessions.

Assessment can be a mix of practical skills assessment, written work, exams, online testing, oral questioning, assignments/coursework, project-based learning.

Can I transfer to an Apprenticeship?

Trainees who secure employment in their chosen occupational area during their Traineeship, can transfer seamlessly to an Apprenticeship at level 2, where available. As an apprentice, if you become unemployed during your Apprenticeship, you can transfer onto a Traineeship to complete your programme.

What progression opportunities will I have?

On successful completion of the full NI Traineeship, you will receive a Traineeship Diploma, Certificate or Award. This is equivalent up to five GCSEs at grades A* - C (including English and Maths qualifications at level 2).

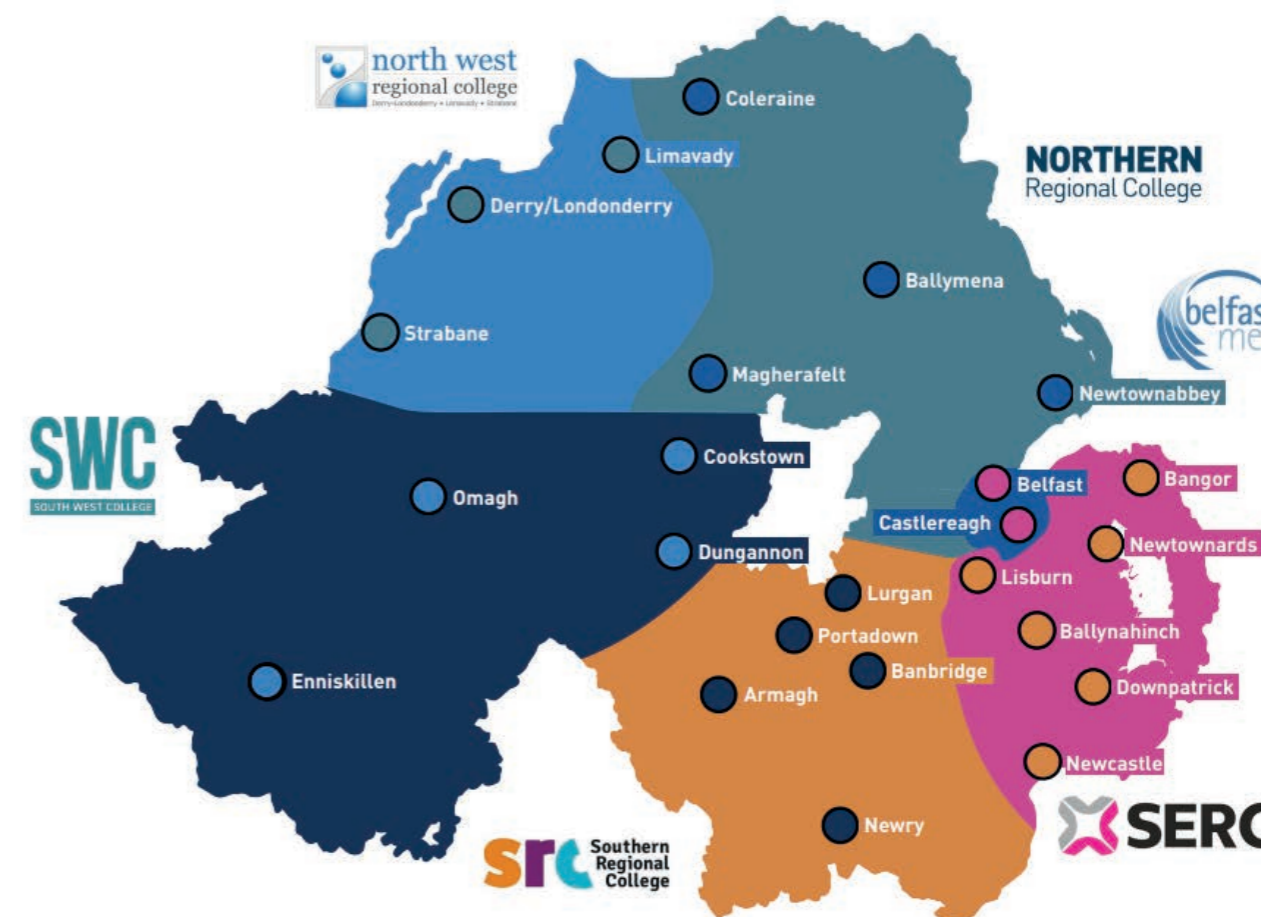
Trainees who do not achieve all the components of the traineeship will still be recognised for their achievement. This may mean they pass the professional and technical qualification but not the level 2 Literacy or level 2 Numeracy elements.

Trainees who do not achieve Level 2 in Essential Skills may still be able to progress to further education courses at level 3 and will continue to study Literacy/Numeracy /GCSEs during the level 3 course.

A Level 2 Traineeship can prepare learners for employment in junior or assistant roles, depending on their vocational pathway.

Where can I apply for a Traineeship?

All six Further Education colleges across Northern Ireland offer NI Traineeships, providing students with the opportunity to gain practical skills, qualifications, and work experience to support their future careers. With campuses located throughout Northern Ireland, we make it easy for learners to access high-quality training and support in a wide range of subject areas.



Contact your local college today for more information and to apply for an NI Traineeship.

LEARNER SUPPORT

Trainees are entitled to the same support as any other full-time further education student.

FUNDING

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Trainees aged 16–19 may be eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a means-tested payment of £30 per week. Payments are subject to full attendance across all subject areas, including work placement, with additional bonuses available for achieving qualifications. EMA application forms are available online.

Further Education Grant

Trainees can apply for a means tested FE Grant of up to £2,092 per year which is non-repayable. The deadline to be guaranteed support is 30th June although applications are open until the 30th September.

Care to Learn

If a trainee already is or is about to become a parent and are aged between 16 and 19 at the start of their traineeship, they may be entitled to assistance with childcare costs.

Hardship Fund

Students aged 18 or over on 1 July in their year of entry and who are experiencing financial hardship may be eligible for support from the Colleges' Hardship Fund. Support is means tested and only available once all other funding options have been explored. Childcare costs may be covered where support is not available through the FE Award or Care to Learn.

Travel/Bus Pass

Trainees may apply for a bus pass through the Education Authority (EA) if they are under 19 on 1 July at year of entry, enrolled on a Traineeship, and live at least 3 miles from their nearest college. Travel costs to work placement will also be reimbursed.

Free School Meals

Trainees under 18 years of age on 31st July at the year of entry, may be entitled to free school meals. Applications must be made by a parent or guardian to the Education Authority. School meal tickets will be available from campus receptions.

SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT

Online Learning

If you are required to engage with online learning, the College may help you with this through the loan of IT equipment.

Job Related Equipment

Trainees will receive free Health and Safety Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (where required). There may also be a requirement for trainees on Health and Social Care courses to be vaccinated when undertaking placements in hospital settings.

PASTORAL CARE

Like all students, trainees will receive a high level of pastoral care from college staff with appropriate support mechanisms in place. They will have a dedicated personal tutor and weekly tutorial classes.

Careers Advice

Experienced careers staff across the sector are committed to helping students with important decisions about career and course choices, by offering free and impartial information and guidance.

Counselling Services

Whether it's study, relationships or money worries, life can be challenging at times. As a student, you will have access to a free and confidential counselling service through Lena Student Wellbeing to help you work through any issues you may be experiencing.

Counselling is a safe place where you can talk with an independent and trained professional and begin to explore issues that are causing you difficulty. Counselling is about helping you to find the answers to improve your own mental wellbeing and keeping healthy as you progress through college and beyond.

Name:
Jack Rogers

Subject:
Floor & Wall Tiling

College:
North West
Regional College



Jack Rogers has taken full advantage of his time completing his Floor & Wall Tiling Traineeship and got involved in the competitive side of the business!

After impressing judges at the Skillbuild regional qualifiers, Jack was selected to compete at the finals because of his outstanding technical ability, attention to detail and passion for his trade.

Jack, has been supported by both lecturers at NWRC's Greystone Campus in Limavady and Milton Keynes' Wall and Floor Tiling Lecturer David McCay who has mentored hundreds of students in skills competition throughout his career.





Name:
Felicity Smith
Subject:
Engineering
College:
South West College

Felicity enrolled on the Traineeship in Engineering at SWC and is completing her placement with Omagh

Aluminium Systems. Despite being the only female in her class, she has quickly developed a passion for hands-on learning, particularly enjoying TIG welding, where she has shown great skill and confidence.

Felicity speaks highly of the course and says she would strongly recommend it to others considering a career in Engineering. She especially values the supportive learning environment, noting that her tutors are very friendly, approachable, and always willing to help. Felicity enjoys her classes immensely and is proud to be building a future in a field she loves.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is about helping students to keep themselves safe, responding to concerns about alleged and suspected harm and implementing measures to help and protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Care Experienced Learners

Coming to college can be a daunting experience, particularly more so for looked after children and care leavers. The Student Support Teams at each college are here to help you adjust to college life smoothly.

Health Hubs

Health Hubs are available across the sector and offer free and confidential health and wellbeing services to young people. Students can access information, support and advice in key areas affecting young people such as:

- Health checks
- Contraception
- Relationships/family
- Smoking cessation
- Drugs and alcohol
- Stress and mental health

Learning Support

Colleges are committed to providing a safe, supportive and welcoming learning environment to help students to become independent learners. Our inclusive policies aim to promote active participation and seamless integration into college life.

Learning Support is additional support to assist students who might otherwise be unable to access a programme of study or who, by reason of their learning difficulty or disability, may require individual support. Learning Support teams assist students with disabilities, learning difficulties or medical conditions to realise their full academic and personal potential.

Student Engagement

College Student Engagement Teams provide ongoing events throughout the academic year to ensure that students have access to essential advice, information and resources to support their personal and academic growth. They also organise many extracurricular activities throughout the year. By participating, students learn new skills, gain valuable work experience, and enhance their CV - all while connecting with enthusiastic, like-minded people and forging lifelong friendships.

Employer Testimonial



Fiona O'Neill, Director of Corporate Services at Regency Carpet Manufacturing in Bangor, says it's important to nurture the next generation of engineers, and working with colleges to offer Traineeship placements plays a major part in this.

Regency Carpets have been working with SERC to offer placements to trainees for the past three years, welcoming students from electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and manufacturing.

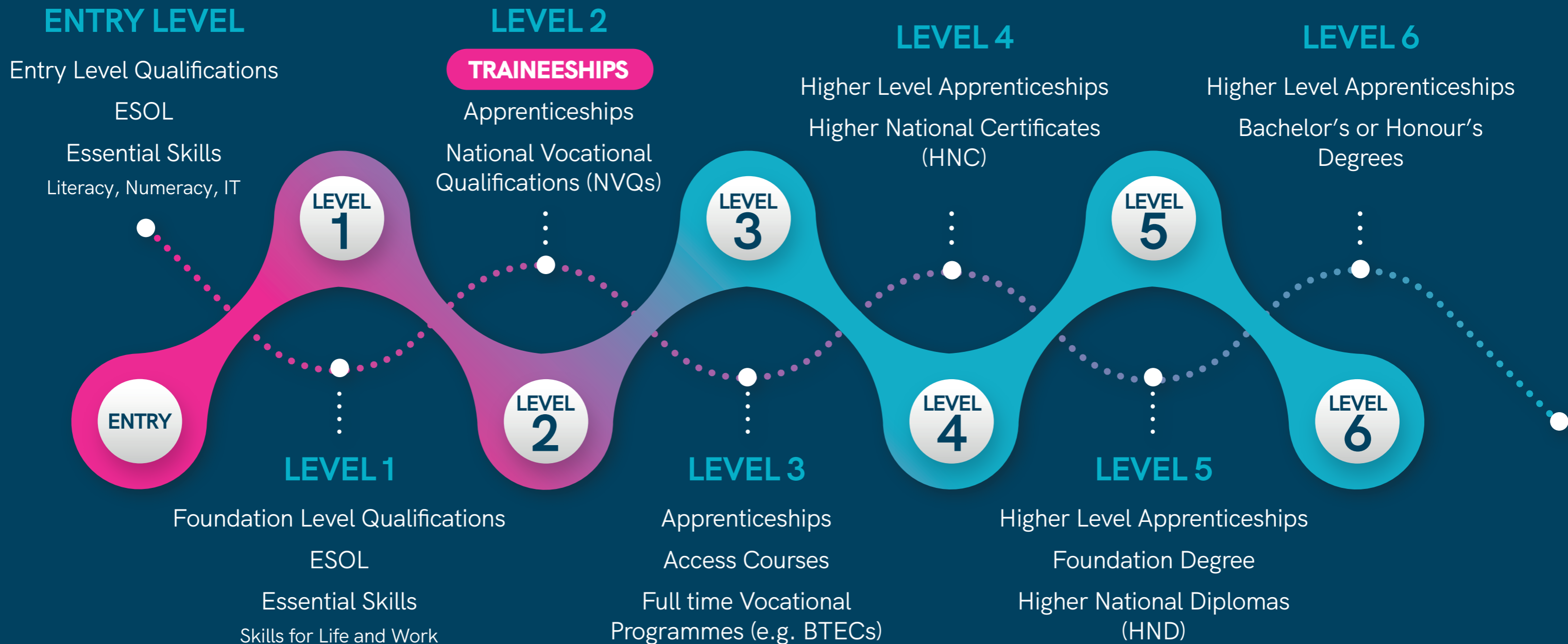
Fiona says: "We recognise the importance of offering students the opportunity to have hands-on, practical experience of the theory they learn through their courses. We have had some truly wonderful students, and we've employed several people that have been introduced to us through the Traineeship programme. I would absolutely recommend any business to get onboard with the Traineeship programme. We received full support from the College, both before and during the placement. Communication was clear and supportive, and the team were always available to provide guidance when needed".

And Fiona is keen to stress that the benefits of the placement work both ways: "Involving a trainee has benefited our organisation by bringing fresh ideas, enthusiasm and additional support to the team. It has also given us the opportunity to develop new talent and contribute to the growth and confidence of a young person entering the workplace. Traineeship students bring enthusiasm, fresh perspectives, and a strong willingness to learn. They are motivated to gain real workplace experience and often show high levels of commitment and reliability".

Contact your local college today for more information and to apply for an NI Traineeship.



FE Qualification Pathways



HOW TO APPLY

Trainees should begin by investigating the many Traineeship courses on offer at all colleges, by visiting college websites.

Details on how to apply can be found on each college's website. Remember to check when each college opens their Traineeships for application as this will vary by college. For all colleges, you will apply via their website. If you want to apply for two different colleges you will need to make two different applications.

Once you have made your application, you may be invited into college for an informal interview or pre entry session. Following this you may be given a Conditional Offer. This means that you may have a place on the course on the condition that you achieve the expected grades at GCSE. Once you confirm your grades on GCSE Results Day in August, you will be issued with a Firm Offer on the course if you meet the conditions for entry.

Contact your local college today for more information and to apply for an NI Traineeship.



ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Is a Traineeship suitable for my child?

Many professional and technical areas require everyone to start at level 2 to build the foundation skills required.

It is designed for everyone including learners who have not yet achieved at least five GCSEs at grade C or above. It provides an alternative pathway to achieve the equivalent of up to five GCSEs.

Your child needs to be 16 years old or over before 1 July in the year they want to start. They may need to further develop their English, Maths, or technical skills or want a practical, career-focused learning pathway.

Why Should My Child Choose a Traineeship?

A Traineeship helps your child:

- Build confidence and independence
- Develop real workplace experience
- Gain qualifications equivalent to GCSEs
- Access high-quality technical training
- Prepare for an apprenticeship or further education
- Learn in a supportive and inclusive environment

Traineeships give young people a practical, supported, and structured pathway to success—no matter what their starting point.

What Will My Child Study?

Every Traineeship includes five key components:

1. Level 2 Professional & Technical Qualification (PTQ) - this is the main vocational subject, e.g. construction, childcare, ICT, engineering.
2. Maths and English - learners work towards level 2 Essential Skills or GCSE grades A-C.
3. Transversal Skills - these are skills that help in any job such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, digital skills, etc.
4. Work-Based Learning (WBL) - a meaningful placement or simulated work environment where learners gain real experience.
5. Additional Vocational Skills - industry requirements or qualifications relevant to their chosen sector.



Name:
Daniel Mahon

Subject:
Animal Care

College:
South Eastern Regional
College

Daniel decided to study Animal Care at SERC after leaving St Malachy's High School Castlewellan. He thoroughly enjoyed this level 2 course as he feels it was a great foundation to move onwards to level 3 and allowed him to study for his Essential Skills in Numeracy at the same time.

Daniel speaks of his experience: "Coming from school to College was very refreshing. There is a bit more freedom and independence, but at the same time there is responsibility. The tutors will help you if you need support, but they don't babysit you - you need to put the work in too".

Daniel has enjoyed the practical side of his course, learning how to handle the animals and keeping himself and the animals safe. Health and safety have also been an important part of the programme.

Daniel successfully completed his Traineeship and is now studying on the Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Animal Management. After his level 3 he would like to work with guide dogs or medical alert service dogs. He is really interested in training and caring for these animals so they can work with people with health needs.

How Long Does a Traineeship Take to Complete?

There are three delivery options depending on the subject area.

- Two-Year Traineeship
- One-Year Traineeship
- Fast Track One-Year Traineeship

Does a Traineeship Have an Induction Period?

Yes. Traineeships include a two-week induction and assessment of literacy and numeracy if grades on entry are below GCSE grade D.

The programme then has up to 34 weeks of learning per year during which there will be mandatory work experience. Work experience varies within each subject area. It may see your child working in a local business, or within a college commercial environment such as working restaurants, kitchens or salons.

What Qualifications Will My Child Achieve?

Learners can achieve one of three overall awards:

Full NI Traineeship Diploma

This is awarded when all the components below are achieved:

- Level 2 Professional & Technical Qualification
- Essential Skills Level 2 / GCSE English & Maths
- Required work-based learning hours
- Transversal skills development

NI Traineeship Certificate

This is awarded when all the components below are achieved:

- Level 2 Professional & Technical Qualification
- Essential Skills Level 1 / GCSE grade D English & Maths
- Required work-based learning hours
- Transversal skills development

NI Traineeship Award

This is awarded when all the components below are achieved:

- Level 2 Professional & Technical Qualification
- Essential Skills/GCSE Level/Grade increase of 1 level of grade on entry in English & Maths
- Required work-based learning hours
- Transversal skills development



Name:
Jade Hunter

Subject:
Hairdressing

College:
Northern Regional
College

Jade completed her GCSE's and A-Levels while at school, but after finishing her A-Levels felt that she needed some time out of education. Having been employed in a few different roles, at the start of 2025 Jade decided that her best chance of finding a good job and a career path that she loved was to return to education.

Jade has always had an interest in Hairdressing and enrolled on the Traineeship in Hairdressing at Northern Regional College. This course has offered her the perfect balance of practical experience along with the science and theory behind Hairdressing.

Jade speaks of her experience so far: "I enjoy meeting new people and learning new things and particularly enjoy the science behind Hairdressing. I would recommend this course to anyone that is interested in working in the industry as it is a brilliant and informative course."

Looking to the future, Jade hopes after completion of her placement to open her own salon and start to build her own clientele.



Name:
Olivia Reid

Subject:
Childcare

College:
Belfast Met

Olivia joined Belfast Met directly after studying her GCSEs at Dominican College in Belfast. Olivia struggled with finding confidence in any particular subject, but after speaking to the Childcare lecturers at Belfast Met during Clearing, she felt that Childcare would be a good fit for her.

Olivia says of her course: "I love the way I'm not in the classroom all the time. I get to spend time on placement, 2 days per week; I'm learning on the job and putting the things I am learning into practice like children's behavioural strategies and how to effectively work with those children who have special and additional needs".

Olivia has been undertaking her placement at Ashgrove Nursery School, working with 3 and 4 year old children.

Olivia hopes to progress to the Level 3 Extended Diploma in Childcare in September. Her placement days will increase on this course, and she hopes to stay at Ashgrove Nursery School. Following this, Olivia plans to progress to Stranmillis University College to study for a degree in Early Childhood Studies



Contact your local college today for more information and to apply for an NI Traineeship.



The six Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland



NORTHERN
Regional College



Disclaimer

Information contained within this prospectus is correct at the time of publication. Each college reserves the right to make changes to courses, entry requirements, fees and other details without notice. Courses are subject to demand and may not run every year. Colleges cannot accept responsibility for any inaccuracies or changes.