



FEBRUARY EDITION

DUKE'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

CAREERS NEWSLETTER 2026

THEME OF THE MONTH
SETTING CAREER-RELATED GOALS

SMART GOAL TEMPLATE FOR SKILLS STATEMENTS

STUDY/CAREER PLANNING RESOURCES

UPCOMING CAREERS EVENTS, MOCK INTERVIEWS, OR CV WORKSHOPS

PARENT RESOURCE: "HOW TO HELP YOUR TEEN STAY MOTIVATED THIS TERM"

FUTURE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE & HOW WE ARE RESPONDING TO ANSWERS

YEAR 9 OPTIONS

UCAS- REPLYING TO OFFERS,
APPRENTICESHIPS- MAKING SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS. CAR



NEW YEAR. NEW GOALS.



How Parents Can Support Career Planning at Home...

January is often used as a time for fresh starts. While New Year's resolutions often focus on health or habits, this time of year is also perfect for students to reflect on their learning, future plans, and career ambitions. With half the academic year still ahead, now is an ideal opportunity for young people to set meaningful goals; whether that's improving GCSE performance, exploring post-16 options, or taking early steps towards a future career pathway.

Parents and carers play a powerful role in this process. Research consistently shows that regular conversations at home about goals, education and careers increase motivation, confidence and achievement.

Why Does Goal Setting Matter?

Having a goal gives students direction and purpose. It helps them connect today's effort in lessons or revision to longer-term outcomes like sixth form courses, apprenticeships, university, or employment.

Goal setting also builds independence and resilience, essential life skills beyond school.





Create Your
Future!

NEW YEAR. NEW GOALS.

In careers education, we use Goal Setting Theory (developed by Edwin Locke), which highlights **five principles** that make goals more effective:

1. Clarity

Goals should be specific, measurable and time-bound. Instead of “do better in maths,” try: “Improve my maths grade from a 5 to a 6 by the summer exams.”

2. Challenge

A good goal stretches a student but is still realistic. Too easy can be demotivating; too hard can feel overwhelming.

3. Commitment

Students need to genuinely care about the goal. Visualising success (e.g. getting their first choice of GCSE options, opening GCSE results, starting college, getting an apprenticeship offer) can strengthen motivation.

4. Feedback

Regular check-ins are essential. Feedback from teachers, tutors and parents helps students adjust their approach and stay on track.

5. Complexity

Big goals can feel daunting. Breaking them into smaller steps makes them manageable and achievable.



HELP AT HOME

Parents, you don't need to be a careers expert to make a difference. Simple, supportive conversations are incredibly valuable.

Ask Open Questions

- What are you working towards this term?
- Is there a subject you want to improve in before the summer?
- Have you thought more about sixth form, college, apprenticeships or other pathways?

Encourage visualisation

Talking about future milestones such as results day, starting a new course, first day of an apprenticeship, can make goals feel real and motivating.

Support routines

Help create a balanced schedule for revision, coursework and rest. Small, consistent effort builds confidence.

Help them break goals into steps

If your child says, "I want to do well in my GCSEs," ask:

- Which subjects need the most focus?
- What could you do this week to move closer to that goal?
- Encourage your child to complete the Unifrog Action Plan shared in this newsletter to set themselves some goals

Celebrate progress

Praise effort and improvement, not just outcomes. Recognising small wins keeps motivation high.

LOOKING AHEAD...

Whether your child is choosing GCSE options, preparing for exams, considering post-16 study, or exploring career pathways, January is a valuable checkpoint. With clear goals, a simple action plan, and encouragement at home, students can make confident progress towards a successful future.

If you would like further information about careers guidance or using Unifrog, please contact the school careers team.

Goal Setting Theory: Action plan

Locke's five principles to making good goals	
Clarity	Your goal should be clear, measurable , and with a timeframe .
Challenge	Your goal should not be super easy , but not impossible either .
Commitment	Your goal must be something you buy into . Remember to visualise the result.
Feedback	You should check in with yourself or others to see if you need to make any adjustments .
Complexity	Don't make your task too tricky, difficult, or overwhelming. To make it easier, break it down into steps .

Writing action plans helps us break our goals into manageable steps.

Here is an example:

<p>Overall goal:</p> <p>I want to start a degree apprenticeship in technology in September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Step one: Over the next two weeks, I need to make a shortlist of available courses on the Unifrog apprenticeship tool and write a list of the different aspects of the application I will need to complete.* <p>*This could include things like the application process, CV, entry requirements, and references.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Step two: By the end of this month, I need to draft my application and CV for the degree apprenticeships applications ready to share with my tutor. ● Step three: On Monday, I need to get feedback from my tutor on my application and discuss my progress in lessons to see if I am meeting my predicted grades. <p>I can use this feedback to adjust my next steps to achieve my goal.</p>
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You can keep repeating this cycle and can adjust your goal as necessary.

Task: Create your action plan to help achieve your goals

Use the template below to create your own goal and action plan. Don't forget to write down any visualisations or images you associate with achieving your goal in the future.

OVERALL GOAL	COMPLETION DATE

STEP ONE	COMPLETION DATE

STEP TWO	COMPLETION DATE

STEP THREE	COMPLETION DATE

You can use this template to make new goals in the future.



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SUPPORTING

YOUR CHILD'S CHOICES

The Year 9 options process is an important step in your child's school journey.

Over the coming weeks, students will choose the subjects they would like to study at GCSE. These decisions help shape future pathways, so feeling informed and supported is key.

Our options infographic shows the key dates in the process. Please also keep up to date with the latest information on the school website:

<https://dukes.ncea.org.uk/student-hub/year-9-options/>

JUL 17 Save the date:
Year 9 Options Evening
Wednesday 4th March 2026

This is a valuable opportunity to speak with teachers and ask questions before choices are finalised.





HOW PARENTS CAN HELP AT HOME

You don't need to be an expert. Simple conversations make a big difference:

Talk about interests and strengths

Which subjects does your child enjoy? Where do they feel confident? Engagement often leads to success.

Explore career ideas together

Use the Unifrog Careers Library to research jobs and see which subjects may be useful for different pathways.

Use our subject infographics

These show the skills gained from subjects and examples of jobs they can lead to. Great for generating ideas.

Encourage Balance

A good mix of subjects your child enjoys, performs well in, and that keeps future options open is ideal.

It's completely normal for students to feel unsure at this stage. With supportive discussions at home, helpful school resources, and guidance from staff, your child can make informed and positive choices for the next stage of their education.

Duke's Secondary Options Timeline



Career Conversations

February 2026 onwards

1:1 interviews will take place with our Duke's career advisor about which subject options could be the best choice for your dream career.

Subject Assemblies

February 2026 onwards

Our subject leaders will support you in your decision making by present information about their courses such as what you learn, how you are assessed and how the qualification may help you in your future education and career choices.

Open Evening & Prospectus

4 March 2026

Find out about your progress in all subjects and have the opportunity to meet the teachers of the option subjects and ask them any questions that will support you in making your option choices.

Student Options Interviews

5 March 2026 onwards

A one-to-one style interview with your tutor to discuss potential options and what you need to do to achieve your personal goals.

Options Deadline

27 March 2026

All forms will need to be handed in by this point.

Optional Parental Meetings

March 2026

An opportunity for you and your parent to ask for further advice or discuss any concerns you may have about your options choices.

Offer Letters Sent Home

The final piece of the puzzle! We will confirm what your option choices are for year 10 are. If there have been any changes in you first choice options we will have spoken to you beforehand.



FUTURE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

This year, all students will be completing the Future Skills Questionnaire, an exciting opportunity for them to reflect on the skills they are developing and the areas they might want to strengthen.

The questionnaire is designed to help students think about the abilities that are most valuable for further study, training, and the world of work, such as problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and adaptability.

HOW IT BENEFITS STUDENTS

- Identifies strengths and areas for development
- Encourages self-reflection and goal setting
- Helps them see how classroom learning links to future careers

HOW WE WILL USE THE RESULTS

The responses will guide our careers programme, ensuring that we provide support, resources, and opportunities that meet the needs of every student. By understanding the skills our students want to develop, we can tailor activities, workshops, and guidance to prepare them for success in their next steps.

Parents can support their child by encouraging honest reflection and discussing the skills they use both in and out of school. Together, we can help students build the confidence and capabilities they need for the future.

It's not too late for parents and carers to share their views on our careers programme.

In December's edition of the careers newsletter, we shared the Duke's Career Journey infographics. This edition can still be viewed on the school website:

<https://cdn.realsmart.co.uk/ncea-dukes/uploads/2025/12/18172307/Dec-25-Dukes-Careers-Newsletter-1.pdf>

PARENT VOICE STILL WELCOME

Your input via Google Forms helps us continue to develop a careers programme that meets the needs of our students and families.

<https://forms.gle/KcXhgjsDzD3xRfPo6>



Responding to University Offers: A Guide for Parents

For many families, receiving university decisions is an exciting milestone. Once offers arrive, students will need to make important choices about where they would like to study. This can feel like a big step, and parental support during this time is incredibly valuable.

Understanding the reply process

Students apply to university through UCAS, and once decisions have been made by universities, they must respond by a set deadline. It's important that students don't leave this until the last minute.

The main reply options

Students can choose two offers:

Firm choice

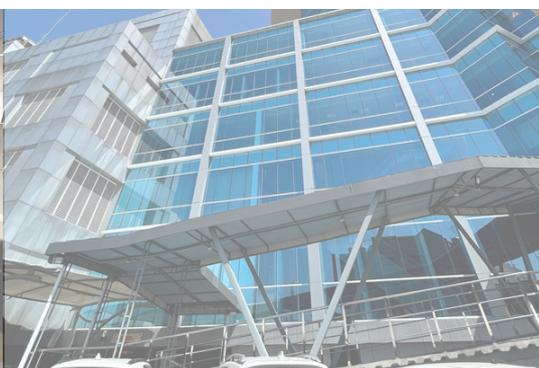
This is their first choice. If they meet the conditions of this offer (for example, specific A-level or BTEC grades), this is where they will go.

Insurance choice

This is a back-up option. The entry requirements are usually lower than the firm choice, offering a safety net if results don't go as planned.

All other offers must be declined.

If a student does not meet the conditions of either choice on results day, they may enter Clearing, where they can apply for courses with remaining places.





HOW YOU CAN HELP AS PARENTS

Talk through each offer

Encourage your child to look beyond the course title and consider:

-  Entry requirements and how achievable they are
-  Course content and modules
-  Location and travel distance
-  Campus feel and facilities
-  Placement or work experience opportunities

Discuss realistic planning

It's natural for students to feel emotionally attached to a particular university. Help them balance ambition with a sensible insurance choice that still excites them.

Think about the bigger picture

Conversations about budgeting, accommodation, travel, and living independently can help students feel more prepared and confident.

Encourage questions

If your child is unsure, universities are happy to answer questions. Open days, offer-holder events, and virtual tours can help them decide.



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APPLYING FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

SHOWING SKILLS THAT MATTER

Apprenticeship applications and interviews often include skills statements or competency-based questions, where students must give real examples of when they have demonstrated key skills like teamwork, communication, problem-solving or leadership.

A helpful way to structure answers is the CAR method:

C – Context: What was the situation?

A – Action: What did you do?

R – Result: What was achieved or learned?

For example, a group project at school, a part-time job, sports team, or volunteering role can all provide strong evidence of skills.

Build a “skills bank”

Students are encouraged to start collecting examples now, so they are ready when applying. Recording experiences as they happen makes applications and interviews much easier. All examples can be stored in the Unifrog Skills tool, keeping everything organised in one place for future applications.

National Apprenticeship Week

In February, we will be running a range of events for Years 7–13 to showcase the apprenticeship route as part of National Apprenticeship Week. These activities will help students understand the wide range of opportunities available and how to prepare for them.

By practising how to explain their skills and taking part in upcoming events, students can feel confident and well-prepared to explore apprenticeship pathways.

Work Experience

Newsletter

Hello future healthcare heroes!

We're here to bring you a dose of inspiration, career tips and opportunities to explore at Northumbria Healthcare. From wards to offices, and everything in-between; this your go-to guide to explore, learn and grow in the world of healthcare.

Upcoming professional masterclasses

Our masterclasses are a great opportunity for you to find out about the different roles at Northumbria Healthcare. Each session will give you an insight into what it's like to work in a specific department.

Healthcare sciences masterclass - 16 March 2026

Perfect for students interested in scientific careers in healthcare, this masterclass introduces key disciplines such as microbiology and haematology, medical engineering, and physiology. Through hands-on practical sessions, participants will explore specialist roles within healthcare science.

Pharmacy masterclass - 27 March 2026

This immersive workshop gives students a close look at the varied world of pharmacy. Through workshops and demonstrations, you'll explore the different pathways within the profession and develop an understanding of the skills pharmacists use every day.

SEND masterclass - 13 February (SEND schools) and 30 April 2026 (mainstream schools)

These masterclasses offer interactive, hands-on activities designed to support students aged 14–18 with additional needs in understanding the wide range of roles available within Northumbria Healthcare. Students will have the opportunity to meet current staff members and explore the facilities at the Healthcare Academy. Sessions will be delivered in small groups and will include a mix of both clinical and non-clinical roles.

Spotlight on podiatry

Our podiatry team treats conditions of the entire lower limb; from hips to toes - not just the feet! They help with common issues such as plantar fasciitis and hammertoes. A key role is advising patients, especially those with diabetes, on proper foot and toenail care to prevent complications.

For more information about a career in podiatry, visit rcpod.org.uk/careers.



Work Experience

Newsletter

Virtual inductions for work experience placements

On your first day, you will take part in our virtual induction. This is a short training session delivered via Microsoft Teams, which you can join from school or home using a laptop, tablet, or phone. The induction offers a taster of some of the training that all new starters at Northumbria Healthcare Trust receive. It is designed to give you an insight into what training is like within the organisation, ensure you have a meaningful placement, and support your health and safety. We will send you further details on how to join the virtual induction closer to your placement start date.

Current apprenticeship opportunities

Apprenticeships	Applications open	Estimated start
Business services practitioner (Level 2)	8 December to 2 January	11 March 2026
Healthcare support worker (Level 2)	1 December to 14 December	18 March 2026
Healthcare support worker (Level 2)	2 February to 26 February	13 May 2026
Business administrator (Level 3)	9 February to 9 March	3 June 2026
Business services practitioner (Level 2)	9 February to 9 March	3 June 2026
Healthcare support worker (Level 2)	9 February to 9 March	11 May 2026
Senior healthcare support worker (Level 3)	27 February to 5 April	15 June 2026
Healthcare support worker (Level 2)	10 April to 10 May	17 August 2026
Senior healthcare support worker (Level 3)	28 June to 2 August	19 October 2026
Healthcare support worker (Level 2)	1 August to 31 August	16 November 2026

Work Experience

Newsletter

Apprenticeship open evening

The open evening is an opportunity to explore the apprenticeships currently on offer at Northumbria Healthcare. You will be able to speak with current staff and students, as well as gain a clear understanding of the application and interview process.

The evening will run from 4.30pm to 7.00 pm, with quiet slots available at the beginning of the evening for those who would benefit from a calmer environment.

We welcomed over 300 attendees last year, with many going on to successfully secure apprenticeships with us throughout the year 😊.

Tickets are available here 🖱️ <https://bit.ly/48GaT3B>

Berwick open day

We are excited to announce an apprenticeship open day based at Berwick this year, in conjunction with the MELISSA Bus 🚌.

The event is an opportunity to explore the apprenticeships currently on offer at Northumbria Healthcare. Attendees will be able to speak with current staff and students and gain an understanding of the application process for future opportunities.



The event will run from 1.00pm – 5.30 pm, with a quiet hour available from 1.00pm to 2.00 pm, suitable for anyone who would benefit from a calmer environment.

Tickets are available here 🖱️ <https://bit.ly/48Jnpzy>

Why choose an apprenticeship?

In case you're still wondering why an apprenticeship might be right for you, we asked some of our apprentices why you should choose an apprenticeship.

Watch here 🖱️ <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/rkmN32rgvjU>