

My oldest son only had 1 GCSE when he went to college at 16. This was a Maths GCSE. I paid £250 for this exam through an adult education evening class. Once at college he found his options were very limited and he was lumped in with students who had failed everything at school. He left college after a year.

My middle son took 5 exams before going to college at 16 because I didn't want a repeat of his brother's experience. He started with GCSEs but moved on to IGCSEs because they were much cheaper and easier to organise.

The college wasn't doing the Maths GCSE evening class any more but he did a Science GCSE course at evening class and this cost £200. He also studied at home for 2 GCSEs. I paid hundreds of pounds for distance learning courses to go with the GCSEs, but I didn't think they were good value for money and I wouldn't choose this option again. The local authority eventually put me in touch with a local school where he could sit the GCSEs. The school was very helpful and also accommodated Access Arrangements for his special needs, though I had to pay privately for the educational psychologist's assessment.

For the remaining 2 exams, we went for IGCSEs because they were cheaper and it was all exams without coursework. The local state school didn't offer the IGCSEs but I'd heard about a local private school from other home educators, and my son had a good experience taking exams there. The main costs for us have been paying £250 to £350 per course for the GCSEs plus paying privately for the educational psychologist report.

I do have a third son and this time around we are doing all IGCSEs because he can just go in and take the exams and we don't have the problem of controlled assessments.