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ABINGDON

THE SIXTH FORM

September 2010

# THE SIXTH FORM

## September 2010

### Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	2
2. QUALIFICATION FOR THE SIXTH FORM .....	2
3. NEW SIXTH FORM ENTRANTS .....	2
4. SIXTH FORM SCHOLARSHIPS .....	2
5. ABINGDON SCHOOL POLICY ON 16 - 18 CURRICULUM .....	3
6. THE SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM IN OUTLINE .....	4
7. SUBJECT PREFERENCES .....	4
9. CHANGE OF SUBJECTS WHEN IN THE SIXTH FORM .....	5

### SUBJECTS

ANCIENT HISTORY .....	6
ART AND DESIGN .....	7
HISTORY OF ART .....	8
BIOLOGY .....	9
BUSINESS STUDIES .....	10
CHEMISTRY .....	11
CLASSICAL LANGUAGES: Latin and Greek .....	12
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY .....	13
DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES .....	14
ECONOMICS .....	15
ENGLISH LITERATURE .....	16
GEOGRAPHY .....	17
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS .....	18
HISTORY .....	19
MATHEMATICS .....	20
MODERN LANGUAGES: French, German and Spanish .....	22
MUSIC .....	23
PHYSICS .....	24
RELIGIOUS STUDIES (Philosophy and Ethics) .....	25

APW  
30.11.2009

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to explain the sixth form curriculum at Abingdon School for those entering the sixth form in September 2010. It contains general advice as well as specific information for each subject. Further copies of this document may be downloaded from the curriculum area of the school website (<http://www.abingdon.org.uk/curriculum/>). The Upper Master will issue details of sixth form organisation in late August 2010.

Now is the time to consider the subjects that you wish to read in the sixth form and your career options. All members of the present fifth year are asked to indicate **tentative** preferences of A level subjects by **Monday 6 December 2009**. This is necessary to allow early planning of the timetable and staffing for the next academic year. Extra information can be gleaned from your GCSE mocks and the parents' evening and you will be asked to provide 'final' preferences in mid-February 2010.

This booklet is being given to you now so that you may have ample time to study it and seek advice in advance of GCSE examination pressures. Please read all the material carefully, and ensure that your parents also have an early opportunity to read it. Subject specific web addresses are provided under the subject headings later in this document if you wish to investigate a syllabus in more detail. These are correct at the time of printing but may be changed by the exam boards concerned. Some fifth year pupils will have already decided on the combination of sixth form subjects that they wish to pursue. The majority, however, will need to spend a considerable time in thought and in discussion before coming to an informed conclusion.

## 2. QUALIFICATION FOR THE SIXTH FORM

During the next few months, your immediate academic target will be the successful completion of your GCSE courses. In order to qualify for the sixth form you will need at least **3As, 2Bs and 2Cs at GCSE, including English and Maths**. A C grade in a particular subject at GCSE is generally considered insufficient preparation for the study of that subject at A level at Abingdon. Where B grades are concerned the situation depends on the A level subject. If you achieve a B grade at GCSE in one of the subjects you wish to study at A level then you should discuss your likely prospects in the subject with the Head of the relevant Department before term begins in September.

## 3. NEW SIXTH FORM ENTRANTS

Applicants for the Abingdon School sixth form from other schools will be asked at interview about the A level subjects they wish to study. They will be asked to complete a subject preference form, and may be offered a place to read four specific A level subjects, provided that they obtain the GCSE requirement stated above, or the equivalent for overseas candidates. Any subsequent changes in the choice of A level subjects may not be possible, and requests in this connection should be promptly discussed with the Director of Studies. This is important because it affects set sizes, numbers of sets and timetabling. When the subjects are to be agreed after GCSE results, we cannot guarantee to be able to provide any desired subject combination; by that stage, many sets are full and the timetable is unalterable.

New sixth form entrants must, please, inform the Registry of their GCSE results as soon as they are known, in late August (telephone 01235 849041 or email: [registrar@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:registrar@abingdon.org.uk)).

## 4. SIXTH FORM SCHOLARSHIPS

Academic scholarships are available on entry to the sixth form from other schools. The academic scholarship examination is usually held in February or at other times by arrangement. Candidates will sit papers in three of the subjects they intend to study at A level, together with a general paper and a reasoning paper. There will also be two subject interviews and two general interviews, one with the Headmaster. Special arrangements are made for overseas candidates.

In addition Music, Art and Design, Sports and Drama scholarships may be awarded on entry to the Sixth form.

Music scholarship candidates are expected to be highly proficient in at least two instruments. Art scholarships may be awarded to pupils who will be studying Art and Design at A level, and are awarded on the basis of a folio of work, an examination and an interview. Sports scholarships may be awarded to a candidate who demonstrates outstanding dedication and commitment to reaching the highest level of performance. A Drama scholarship may be awarded to an outstanding candidate who demonstrates significant ability as a stage performer combined with a strong commitment to working as part of a creative team. The award of Music, Art, Drama and Sport scholarships all take place in the Lent term. More information regarding these scholarships is available from the School website as well as the Registrar.

All scholarships are means-tested, enabling the school to allocate more awards and ones that are appropriate to need as well as ability. They carry an entitlement to a nominal amount of £300 per year, to which is added a means-tested element based on assessment of parental need which may be worth up to half of the tuition fee. For entry in September 2010 there will be several sixth form scholarships available that may be worth, on a means-tested basis, up to half the tuition fee for dayboys or up to half the combined tuition and boarding fee for boarders.

Arkwright scholarships could be available for pupils who are considering a career in the field of Product Design or Engineering. These scholarships, offered by the Combined Trusts Scholarship Trust in conjunction with certain schools, are intended to enable the study of Design and Technology at sixth form level. Awards are made to the value of £500 and are intended to support the scholar in pursuing his interest in design. Applications must be submitted by January in the academic year in which the candidate applies for a sixth form place at Abingdon. The scholarship comprises a written design paper followed by an external interview if short listed. Further details of this external scholarship can be found at [www.arkwright.org.uk](http://www.arkwright.org.uk) or from the head of Design Technology DM Hughes ([dan.hughes@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:dan.hughes@abingdon.org.uk)).

If parents wish to be considered for a means-tested award they are asked to complete a confidential form, but they are under no obligation to do so. The value of any financial award is reassessed annually. All cases are judged on their own merits and parents are invited to discuss their eligibility for a financial award with the Bursar.

Scholarships at Abingdon carry considerable status and privileges. Scholarships have equal status and privileges irrespective of their value, and any means-tested awards are totally confidential.

For more information contact the Registrar by telephone 01235 849041 or via email [registrar@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:registrar@abingdon.org.uk)

## **5. ABINGDON SCHOOL POLICY ON 16 - 18 CURRICULUM**

In the lower sixth all pupils study four subjects. All these subjects should be chosen initially in the expectation that the pupil will pursue that subject to A2 level.

We aim to ensure that each pupil will be closely monitored by his tutor and housemaster as he passes through the sixth form, so that both the range and the number of his subjects is constantly assessed in relation to his ability and his future. At the end of the lower sixth discussions are held as needed between the pupil, his tutor, housemaster and the Director of Studies about what programme each pupil should follow in the upper sixth. Some pupils continue with the same programme, others change from four to three subjects. In some instances it may be possible to take up another AS subject in the upper sixth. Decisions are finalised at the start of the upper sixth following AS results and further discussion. The Headmaster will continue to exercise overall supervision of all matters relating to the pupils' subject preferences.

In all subjects (except Mathematics), two AS units will be taken at the end of the lower sixth. (From 2008 each A level subject (except Mathematics) has had four units, two classified as AS and two as A2). The A2 units are taken at the end of the upper sixth. (The system used in Mathematics is discussed under that subject heading later in this document.)

There are two occasions in the two-year course at which the units may be taken, namely, June of the lower sixth and June of the upper sixth. A strictly limited number of retakes of units may be possible in January of the upper sixth, although this policy is under constant review. Retakes of units may also be taken in the June of the upper sixth.

## 6. THE SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM IN OUTLINE

The lower sixth timetable has two main components. First, pupils will study four main A level subjects, one from each of the blocks in the timetable. This typically occupies thirty-two lessons a week. Secondly, the remaining lessons include one of compulsory General Studies, some other optional General Studies courses, some Further Mathematics if appropriate, and supervised private study. As part of their General Studies course, all lower sixth pupils cover some of the "key skills" topics during the lower sixth year. Information on General Studies courses will be provided on the first day of the lower sixth.

## 7. SUBJECT PREFERENCES

Sixth formers study four subjects. Your task is to combine the information in this booklet with the opinions and guidance available to you from your parents, your tutor, your subject teachers, the master in charge of university entrance (Mr Mearns), and the master in charge of careers (Dr Gibbs). If you have any queries about the suitability for you of any particular subject course, consult your teacher in that subject or the Head of Department concerned. In all other matters your tutor and your housemaster are your main source of advice. You should keep your tutor informed of your latest thinking.

After pupils have expressed their "final" preferences in mid February a blocking system will be constructed to suit as many pupils as possible. Most subject combinations are usually possible, but we do not allow pupils to study both Business Studies and Economics. Also, pupils may choose **either** Mathematics **or** Further Mathematics, but not both. If your particular combination of subjects is not possible under the blocking system, Dr Willis will contact you directly to discuss how the problem may be resolved.

**If, at any stage up to September 2010, you wish to alter your A level subjects, you must immediately inform the Director of Studies, Dr Willis, in case his latest version of the blocking system will not permit your revised combination of subjects. Alteration is only possible with the permission of the Director of Studies.**

The most suitable combinations of A level subjects are described in the notes on individual subjects in the rest of this booklet. Do not choose your preferences on the basis of your empathy with particular teachers - it is your interest in, and enthusiasm for, a subject that matters, provided that it satisfies your career aspirations. Do not be worried if at this stage you have little idea of which subjects you wish to study in the sixth form.

In general, entry to the professions, business and industry rarely requires any particular A level subject. A combination of arts, humanities and science A levels, offering greater breadth, is encouraged. Those pursuing the sciences, however, may find their options more restricted. Those wishing to study medicine or related biological subjects should study chemistry. Those wishing to pursue any form of engineering should study physics and mathematics.

**We must reserve the right not to run a subject if very few pupils opt for it. Not all combinations of subjects will be possible, so pupils are asked to rank their preferred selection of subjects in order of importance to them.**

## 8. GENERAL STUDIES

The sixth form involves more than the study of specialist subjects in depth. The General Studies programme is designed to give you a broad experience of subjects outside the scope of your A levels and to equip you with skills that will enhance your university applications and interview technique.

### Lower Sixth

There are two distinct elements to the Lower Sixth General studies programme. The first is a 'roundabout' of sessions covering, Key Skills, UCAS applications, Music, Science, Philosophy and a variety of other topics. These are attended by all boys. The second is the option to study an extra subject, usually resulting in another qualification, in addition to your chosen AS Levels. These subjects are not available as part of the standard curriculum and include courses such as AS ICT, GCSE Italian, GCSE Russian, GCSE Physical Education and others. Details of these are given below.

### Upper Sixth

In the Upper Sixth there is a similar roundabout system covering more useful topics such as Money Management, Personal Relationships, and other subjects chosen to enrich your normal academic study. There is also a programme of courses in the Michaelmas and Lent terms for boys who drop a subject when moving from AS to A Level. These courses change from year to year, but last year they included Military History, Philosophy, Human Rights, Biblical Studies and Medieval Combat.

### Optional Courses (Lower Sixth)

AS ICT offers the chance to pursue IT skills to a new level, culminating in the certified qualification. It is useful for anyone interested in getting ahead of the crowd in terms of IT literacy.

GCSE courses in Italian and Russian are offered in the sixth form as part of the General Studies programme. Each year a group of 10 – 12 boys take Italian GCSE and most achieve A\*. It is also possible to take part in the Italian exchange with St Helen's. An introduction to Mandarin, which enables you to learn the basics of this language and develop an understanding of Chinese culture, is also available. We would like as many sixth formers as possible to have the opportunity to develop their language learning skills, depending of course on their timetable and A Level commitments. Learning a language from scratch at this stage is exciting and challenging – and an extra language qualification can only enhance your CV!

PE GCSE involves assessment of four chosen sports. Topics covered are exercise and training, anatomy and physiology and factors affecting participation. Boys are assessed on their ability to perform the sport, ability to analyse others performance in the sport and understanding of the principles.

Further information about General Studies can be obtained from Mr Balderson ([simon.balderson@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:simon.balderson@abingdon.org.uk))

## 9. CHANGE OF SUBJECTS WHEN IN THE SIXTH FORM

Once in the sixth form any possible changes of sixth form subjects or sets must be discussed with your parents, subject teachers, tutor, housemaster and the Director of Studies.

AP Willis - Director of Studies ([peter.willis@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:peter.willis@abingdon.org.uk))

November 2009

# ANCIENT HISTORY

OCR Classics: Ancient History (H042 for AS; H442 for A level)

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/classics/ancient\\_history/index.aspx](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/classics/ancient_history/index.aspx)

'To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?' The ancient orator Cicero's words were quoted by the government minister Lord Adonis when he announced that in the light of immense public pressure the government was reversing the decision to get rid of Ancient History as a separate A-level. In the same debate Baroness Warnock described ancient history as 'an extraordinarily useful subject... which teaches pupils in a manageable way what it is to seek and use evidence, both literary and archaeological. It is an ideal A-level subject.'

The new OCR ancient history syllabus lives up to this billing. It offers the opportunity to study the civilisations of Greece and Rome, two of the most influential cultures in world history. On the Greek side we study the creation of the world's first democracy, its climb to greatness, and the ruin of its empire during the first 'world' war; and on the Roman front, the establishment by Augustus of a military dictatorship with a superb propaganda machine. No knowledge of Greek or Latin is required, since all sources are studied in translation, and Classical Civilisation GCSE is only a slight advantage given the more historical slant of the A-level syllabus.

Ancient History is traditionally considered to be an ideal complement to the study of English, History, Latin, Greek, or Politics, though the broad nature of the syllabus and the skills involved make it relevant whatever one's discipline. The ability to select relevant information from a mass of raw data is crucial; candidates will also be expected to argue a case in essays, make artistic judgments upon literature and architecture, and draw parallels with later history and politics. A willingness to read and study outside class will be essential if a pupil wishes to profit fully from the course.

The focus is ancient sources, not only literary and historical texts, but also archaeological, inscriptional and architectural evidence. The ancient history section of the school library is very strong, and the department holds a wide selection of visual material of relevance to the topics being studied. In addition the department runs annual Classics trips abroad as well as trips to the British Museum and to Greek drama productions. There are also conferences and lectures to broaden perspectives still further.

There are two units at AS, each worth 50%, one Greek and one Roman, examined by essays and questions about particular sources. The Greek unit focuses on Athenian democracy. In the modern world well over half its countries are democracies. Nearly all of us are democrats nowadays! In this option we study the origins in Classical Athens of this modern-day worldwide phenomenon. The Roman unit concentrates on the figure of Augustus. A master of propaganda who knew all about 'spin', Augustus created an entirely new system of monarchical government from the ruins of the Roman Republic: we study all the ways in which he sold these new politics to the Roman people.

At A2 there is a greater focus on social, intellectual and cultural history, but the equal division between Greek and Roman history remains: both topics are examined through essays. The Greek topic focuses on Athenian culture during the fifth century BC, one of the richest ages of human creativity of any period, witnessing the birth of drama, history and philosophy to name but three areas. The Roman topic is called 'The invention of Imperial Rome' and looks at the way in which the establishment by Augustus of the *principate* transformed the government and appearance of the city of Rome and its place as the centre of the Empire from Augustus, who claimed to have rebuilt the city in marble, through to Domitian one hundred and fifty years later. It explores the way in which the Roman world was transformed in this period, the impact of which is still felt across Europe to this day.

CJ Burnand ([chris.burnand@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:chris.burnand@abingdon.org.uk))

# ART AND DESIGN

Edexcel GCE in Art and Design

[www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/art/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/art/Pages/default.aspx)

The study of Art and Design will develop your ability to appreciate the visual world and to respond to it in a personal and creative way. The main teaching takes place through practical studio work but your investigation of artists and designers will help you gain an understanding of the ideas and issues that confront artists today and is an essential part of your studies.

We do take students who have not taken Art and Design at GCSE but the work presented for assessment is in the form of visual art works and a good grade at GCSE is going to be the best foundation for success. If you are creative or 'good at drawing', you may have the basic skills to succeed. However, it is worth visiting a collection of modern and contemporary art and considering if you are able to appreciate and enjoy the aims of the artists whose works are displayed.

The Art School make provision for Sixth form students by offering a life class on one evening a week, and in the Upper Sixth by providing a small studio area where students can leave work in progress. It is therefore expected that all students will be happy to attend the art studios and participate in gallery visits outside prescribed lesson times.

At Abingdon you will have the chance to develop practical skills in drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture, as well as working in ways that mix up these traditional areas. Opportunities to work in a design or craft based approach will be possible. (Actual approaches used will depend to a degree on the staffing of the course.) Use is made of digital and photographic images as appropriate. During the course sketchbook journals are kept where you explore and document the ideas and processes investigated, as well as information about the artists, designers and craftspeople you will have discovered through the department library, trips to London galleries and seminars with slides. In October 2009, sixth formers travelled to Paris to study in one of the great cities in the world for art. It is expected that another foreign visit will be planned for 2010-2011.

The Lower Sixth (AS) course is divided into 2 practical units. The first, worth 60% of the marks, starts with the aim of developing your skills in a broad range of media and the teaching is quite structured. As the unit progresses you are encouraged to develop to your own individual strengths and interests. The second unit, which is worth 40% of the AS marks, is an externally set unit with a given theme from which students must develop their work. Approximately 8 weeks are given to prepare for this and 8 hours to develop a final piece. All units require supporting work journals.

The Upper Sixth (A2) course requires students to work much more individually. Unit 3 has two elements: practical work and, in addition, a personal study which includes a written element of no less than 1000 words. A final independent piece of work from an externally set starting point is the last unit (Unit 4). The ambition and commitment required to achieve the higher grades is considerable.

Art A level forms part of a good general education, which is accepted as any other A level by universities. Art and Design at degree level is normally accessed via a one-year foundation course. A Level Artists at Abingdon have gone on to courses in graphic design, three-dimensional design, fashion, as well fine art. For those thinking of studying Architecture, Art A level is almost essential as a portfolio of visual work is normally required. The experience of Art and Design can be useful for those thinking of careers in advertising, marketing, publishing and work in the media. Success in Art requires organisation, determination, creativity, dedication and imagination; transferable skills you can take into any career or job.

JP Nairne ([james.nairne@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:james.nairne@abingdon.org.uk))

# HISTORY OF ART

AQA GCE in History of Art (Course code 5251 for AS and 6251 for A2)

[web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/hisa.php](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gceasa/hisa.php)

The AS divides into two units:

1. Visual Analysis and Interpretation. This unit will introduce a vocabulary for dealing with the description and analysis of painting, sculpture and architecture. It will also develop the recognition of period styles of art, for example High Renaissance, Baroque.
2. This unit deals with themes such as genres of art, techniques, historical and social context, patronage, gender, etc. Three of these themes will be studied in greater depth.

This initial year will enable the students to look at the world that surrounds them with more analytical and informed eyes, and acquire the vocabulary and the way of thinking that will lay the foundations for the more in-depth studies in the A2 year.

The AS essays are limited to 30 minutes' writing, but do require specific and at times in-depth information.

A2 also divides into two units, each of which asks for an in-depth study understanding of art-historical, philosophical and socio-historical issues around chosen works of art. These will centre on the Art and Architecture of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe.

The A2 essays require 45 minutes' writing and need to reflect the greater depth of learning and a thorough understanding of the issues required by the syllabus.

The above is conveyed through interactive teaching, slides, videos with current television programmes, Open University support material, the National Gallery video programmes and other commercially produced film. Own research is encouraged, with sources of reading material suggested. There are frequent visits to British galleries and accompanied attendance at study days covering relevant topics.

History of Art links well with other Humanities subjects. It is essay-based and analytical; it will therefore hone the same skills as English, History etc. It has also been studied by science students, keen on broadening their culture and has been found congenial by linguists.

For university entry, History of Art is perceived similarly to the subjects mentioned above. In terms of study subject combination, it goes well with the afore-mentioned subjects, as well as the Classics and Modern Languages.

N Levick ([nlevick@shsk.org.uk](mailto:nlevick@shsk.org.uk))  
The School of St Helen and St Katharine

# BIOLOGY

AQA GCE in Biology (Course code 1411 for AS and 2411 for A2)

[web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/science/biology\\_materials.php?id=03&prev=03](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/science/biology_materials.php?id=03&prev=03)

It is possible to download a copy of the specification from the AQA website as well as copies of question papers and their mark schemes. From this link it is also possible to download a very useful student guide which has the following sections: What to expect if you decide to study this subject. What makes this an interesting course? What skills will you develop? How is the subject assessed? Complementary areas of study. Possible career options.

At AS level pupils study two theory units, each taught by a different teacher. These are “Biology and disease” and “The variety of living organisms”. Pupils are also assessed on their practical and investigative skills. This follows the format of the GCSE course which Abingdon pupils will be familiar with. It is important to realise that factual recall will only make up about one third of assessment at this level. Of equal importance is the ability to apply knowledge in unfamiliar situations and a good knowledge of “How science works”. The coursework component of the assessment follows a similar format to GCSE where pupils have a Practical Skills Assessment and an Investigative Skills Assessment.

At A2 pupils again study two theory units, “Populations and environment” and “Control in cells and organisms”. Assessment is similar but there is more emphasis placed on the ability to be able to apply knowledge. There is a longer essay question in one of the A2 examination papers in which knowledge of material beyond the syllabus is required in order to get full marks. An Investigative Skills Assessment is also done at A2 level although data is analysed statistically at this level. A number of activities take place in the biology department to provide enrichment activities outside of lessons. The Biology Society is open to all sixth form biologists. A number of lectures take place during the year from a wide range of speakers, there is an annual Guest Night and annual Biology Society Dinner. The Golgi Body provides an opportunity for pupils to prepare and speak to their peer group about wide-ranging topics in the field of biology. There are extra sessions for pupils aiming to apply to Oxford or Cambridge Universities and sessions to help prepare pupils who are thinking of applying for medicine. Field work is carried out at a local nature reserve in the upper sixth and the department also organises trips further afield every few years.

Biology is one of the most popular A level subjects in the country and pupils study a wide range of other subjects along with it. Studying Chemistry with Biology in the sixth form probably opens up a greater range of university courses but it is not essential. Biology is a good choice of subject for people who want a career in health and clinical professions, such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, physiotherapy, pharmacy, optometry, nursing, zoology, marine biology or forensic science.

SE Bliss ([simon.bliss@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:simon.bliss@abingdon.org.uk))

# BUSINESS STUDIES

AQA Business Studies (Course code 2130: 1131 for AS and 2131 for A2)

[http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/business/business\\_overview.php?id=05&prev=05](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/business/business_overview.php?id=05&prev=05)

Business Studies is not taught below A-level at Abingdon, and because there is some overlap with the A-level Economics syllabus we do not allow pupils to read both subjects. What makes Economics and Business Studies different from one another is their contrasting focus and approach to issues. Economics teaches students to think logically and to use theories to understand how *economies* operate; Business Studies literally studies businesses and how they operate within their environments. The Business Studies course is designed to provide an understanding of the nature of typical problems faced by businesses. This includes investigating the principles governing business decisions, and the potential solutions to practical problems. Decision making is an underlying theme, with an equal emphasis placed throughout the course on theory and practical application. Case studies, presentations, videos and industrial visits (both in the UK and abroad) are used in the teaching of the course, thus providing pupils with a relevant conceptual framework. An overseas trip tends to take place every other year, and recent examples include Strasbourg, Poland and New York. It is to be hoped that industrial visits to places such as Jaguar Cars, Chelsea Football Club, Coca Cola and BMW Mini bring some a sense of realism to the theoretical issues explored in class. Increasing use is also made of the school's Virtual Learning Environment and internet resources such as virtual factories, firms' databases, and decision making exercises to bring the business world into the classroom without having to leave the school.

The AQA syllabus is academically stimulating and challenging, and the A-level is divided into four units. These are: Planning and Financing a Business, Managing a Business, Strategies for Success and The Business Environment and Managing Change. At AS level the course focuses on starting up and managing a small to medium-sized business, whilst at A2 level the emphasis changes to larger companies facing more complex scenarios. At both AS and A2, pupils study elements of marketing, accounting and finance, operations management, people management, external influences on the firm, and the integrating theme of objectives and strategy. At AS level the mode of assessment includes short answer questions, a mini case study and multi-part data response questions. At A2 the course is assessed by extended answers on an unseen case study, pre-release research tasks and a choice of essays.

Business Studies requires a reasonable level of numeracy and involves more numerical work than Economics. However, the course is testing business studies and not mathematics, and the important skill is to be able to understand and apply the figures to the business being studied. Pupils should also be good at conveying their ideas on paper with clarity and structuring their arguments in a logical manner. The ability to think critically is also advantageous. The course is varied and challenging. Not only does it provide a grounding in sound business theory and practice, but it complements many other combinations of subjects, thus providing a thorough foundation for anyone wishing to read an accountancy, finance-related or management-based course at university. Significant numbers of our pupils go on to read business-related courses at university. It should, however, be noted that offers from Cambridge University and the London School of Economics would ignore your BS grade and require 3 other A levels; this stricture does not apply to other universities.

SJ Grills ([simon.grills@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:simon.grills@abingdon.org.uk))

# CHEMISTRY

OCR Chemistry A (AS H034, A2 H434)

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/chemistry/a/index.aspx](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/chemistry/a/index.aspx)

The aim of the Chemistry Department at Abingdon is to provide a course that is intellectually stimulating as well as providing a strong foundation for future study. The course throughout the Sixth Form builds on the ideas and knowledge laid down during the GCSE years. As at GCSE developing a good grasp of fundamental principles involved in the subject is highly important. The factual base of the subject is supported by practical work, and by an emphasis on experimental evidence that backs up our knowledge and understanding of the subject. This will include the study of some modern instrumental techniques such as Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy and how chemistry impacts on society.

Chemistry at this level is likely to appeal to those who enjoyed the subject through the Middle School and who coped with the demands of their GCSE course. Although some mathematics remains in the course, this is now mostly confined to the A2 units. The mathematical principles involved tend to involve basic numeracy and ability to rearrange equations, plot graphs, estimate accurately and so on, rather than knowledge of advanced techniques.

The Department encourages the boys to develop their understanding of the subject beyond the confines of the syllabus. There is an active Chemistry society which organises lectures and it is possible for members of the sixth form to get involved with a long running practical research project. This is run in conjunction with the Chemistry department at Oxford University. The most able boys will also be prepared and entered for the Chemistry Olympiad. For the past two years the school has provided a member of the final GB team.

The course being followed is the OCR Chemistry A specification and is broken down as follows:

*Lower Sixth:* a more detailed look at many familiar topics from GCSE: atomic structure, bonding, Periodic Table. In addition, organic chemistry is widened to examine a larger array of carbon-based molecules; and topics such as energy, kinetics and equilibria also broadened to consider more qualitative aspects, as well as practical applications. There are three exam units at AS and A2 level, one of which is the coursework part of the subject. The coursework at both AS and A2 level involves the students completing experimental tasks in class time. The students are then assessed in one of the following areas: qualitative, quantitative and evaluative. Coursework counts for 20% of the marks at both AS and A2.

*Upper Sixth:* As well as further study of organic molecules, topics in physical chemistry such as kinetics and equilibrium are dealt with quantitatively. In addition transition metal chemistry is encountered and modern laboratory techniques for analysis are also investigated. The coursework follows the same format as at AS level but the two other exam units will include synoptic elements of the whole two year course.

At both AS and A2 level most of the exam questions require only short answers but there are a limited number of questions that need a longer response.

A growing number of boys go onto read Chemistry at university and a large proportion of these do so at either Oxford or Cambridge. Chemistry is also still a key subject for a great many university courses: medicine and veterinary medicine; biological sciences, especially biochemistry; natural sciences; chemical engineering and indeed almost any scientific discipline. A degree in Chemistry is highly sought after in the work place and will open up opportunities in many fields. This does not just include science related jobs but also careers in business and finance.

I Middleton ([ian.middleton@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:ian.middleton@abingdon.org.uk))

# CLASSICAL LANGUAGES: Latin and Greek

OCR Classics: Latin (H039 for AS; H439 for A level)

OCR Classics: Classical Greek (H040 for AS; H440 for A level)

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/classics/unendorsed/index.aspx](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/classics/unendorsed/index.aspx)

Latin and Greek are demanding A level subjects, but ones which are endlessly rewarding. They can be – and are – studied in combination with just about every subject offered in the Sixth Form at Abingdon; they complement studies in both the arts and sciences. The literature covers a wide range of human experience, and the skills required for the study of a classical language are much in demand amongst employers, not only in ‘traditional’ professions (such as the civil service, accountancy, the law, management and teaching) but also in financial institutions and computing firms. Employers realise that Classicists have an eye for detail and a great deal of adaptability. Recent research has shown that Classics graduates are more likely to be in employment immediately after university than any other graduates.

It is usual for the teaching of each Latin or Greek A level group to be split between three teachers, to provide a range of approaches and responses to the literature. The department is keen to encourage pupils to see the importance of the study of the past to an understanding of the present, and to this end runs annual Classics trips abroad (recent destinations have included Provence, Tunisia, Italy, Greece, Sicily, Turkey and Crete) as well as trips to the British Museum and to Greek drama productions in Oxford and London. Pupils also attend A level conferences of relevance to their set texts where possible, and speakers are regularly invited to the school to talk on a variety of associated topics.

We expect boys to own a copy of a particular dictionary and grammar in the language(s) they are studying, which we obtain for them at the start of the lower sixth and which they will need throughout the sixth form.

The pattern of the courses for Latin and Greek is identical. The two units of the AS, taken at the end of the lower sixth will provide an excellent stepping-stone towards the A2 in the upper sixth. The first tests the language and is worth 50% of the AS. It consists of two unseen translations that mark a significant but reasonable step beyond GCSE (there is for example still a set word-list, albeit longer). Within the year, however, we push well beyond the demands of this paper to establish a secure linguistic grounding for the greater demands of the A2.

The second AS paper examines literature, and tests candidates on two authors (Ovid and Cicero in Latin, Homer and Lysias in Greek): passages are taken from these authors for translation and comment. We study them in their historical and literary contexts: indeed, the syllabus is not restrictive and allows plenty of time for ‘reading around’ the subject. In this way pupils improve fluency in reading the languages and gain a broad experience of the worlds in which the various texts were produced.

In the A2 there are again two equally weighted units, a verse paper and a prose paper. Each of these is devoted half to language and half to a set-text. The language elements build on the work already done in the lower sixth, while the texts one is able to study at A2 include some of the finest in the classical canon, such as Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Tacitus, Euripides and Thucydides. These are expected to be studied in even greater depth than those set at AS. However, even at A2 there remains time to read a variety of other prose and verse and to broaden one’s classical horizons. Indeed the department sees it as an essential element to the study of the subject that the syllabus provides a framework for pupils to pursue their own interests rather than a straitjacket to restrict them.

CJ Burnand ([chris.burnand@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:chris.burnand@abingdon.org.uk))

# DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

AQA Product Design (3D Design) ( AS 1551 – A2 2551)

[web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/technology/dt\\_product\\_3d\\_noticeboard.php?id=07&prev=07](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/technology/dt_product_3d_noticeboard.php?id=07&prev=07)

The Design and Technology A-Level is an exciting practical based course, which gives pupils an insight into the role of a commercial designer and gives them a huge amount of technical knowledge and understanding about materials and manufacturing processes. The course will suit pupils with an interest in designing and making, a curiosity of how products are designed and manufactured and those with a flair for creativity. It gives a good background to all those interested in engineering or designing in its widest sense.

The A-level is a natural progression from the GCSE Resistant Materials course and as such builds upon the practical skills and processes covered at GCSE. It is therefore essential that boys have completed the GCSE or equivalent.

## **Unit 1: Materials, Components and Application (50% of AS, 25% of A Level)**

The theory material at AS expands upon the knowledge gained at GCSE. It covers materials, manufacturing processes and starts to introduce the commercial role and responsibility of a product designer in industry. Pupils will come in to contact with new 'Smart Materials' and begin to be able to relate materials and their properties to many commercial products and designers' work. The submission of this unit comprises of a 2 hour written examination paper.

## **Unit 2: Design and Make (50% of AS, 25% of A Level)**

The design and make unit of the AS requires pupils to follow a common design brief. Within these constraints they will research the chosen area, analyse existing products, generate a range of feasible elegant design ideas and then use the wide range of manufacturing facilities to produce a high quality piece of practical work. The submission of this unit comprises of an electronic design folder, a range of concept models and a manufactured product. Some recent project areas include Flat Pack Furniture and Low Voltage Lighting although the context tends to change each year.

## **Unit 3: Design and Manufacture (25% of A Level)**

The theory unit at A2 build upon the AS and focuses on existing designers, their influences and the products they have produced. It also studies the major design movements of the last century and looks forward to the decisions likely to face the next generation of engineers and designers. The submission of this unit is in the form of a written examination and is essay based.

## **Unit 4: Design and Make (25% of A Level)**

This practical unit draws together all of the knowledge and experience of the course and allows pupils to tackle their own in depth design study. The expectation is that the product they produce is of commercial viability and quality. The subject area and direction is identified entirely by the pupil with guidance from their subject teacher, but provides them with the opportunity to produce an outstanding piece of practical work. Submission as at AS is through an electronic portfolio and practical piece.

The course, although heavily biased towards practical work does have a great deal of theory and design folio content. Pupils will need good time management skills and must be willing to work consistently across the year. Pupils have access to the department outside of lessons, and many thrive in the design studio feel to the department. The course is designed to be a complementary subject to Mathematics, Physics, Art and Design, or a contrasting subject with English, History, Geography and Modern Languages.

DM Hughes ([dan.hughes@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:dan.hughes@abingdon.org.uk))

# DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES

Edexcel GCE in Drama and Theatre Studies (8DR01 AS; 9DR01 A2)

[www.edexcel.com/quals/gce08/drama/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce08/drama/Pages/default.aspx)

Drama and Theatre Studies attracts boys from Abingdon and girls from St Helen's. The course is taught by teachers at both schools. Pupils are required to see a number of plays and take part in productions as part of the assessment. They are also encouraged to participate in extra-curricular productions staged by the drama departments at both schools, or beyond them (for example, the National Youth Theatre). Drama often attracts those who also have an interest in film and are members of the Abingdon Film Unit. Drama is demanding in terms of your out-of-school time, so a strong and demonstrable commitment is essential, although prior study of the subject at GCSE is not an absolute requirement.

Drama is practical, intellectual and artistic. It has a three-dimensional character: you need to be able to bring ideas to life as a performer; you need a good visual, aural and spatial imagination; you also need to be able to analyse texts and write essays. Above all, you need to be able to work well with others and willing to share your ideas.

The first term of the AS features practical study of two plays, followed by written *Exploration Notes* (3000 words). Students also see a live theatre production and write a 1000 word evaluation. In the second and third terms, students prepare for two performances to a visiting examiner. One is either a monologue (2 minutes) or duologue (5 minutes); the other requires you to take a role in a play (lasting up to an hour).

In Unit 3 of the A2, you create of an original piece of theatre with others and submit your own written account of the development of the piece, assessed with the final performance. In Unit 4, you prepare for a written paper in June, for which you a) explore a set play from a director's perspective and b) evaluate a performance of a play you have seen (usually by Shakespeare) which you compare with the original staging conditions of the play.

Drama and Theatre Studies combines well with almost any other A Level subject, although it most commonly accompanies other Arts subjects such as English, Art, Music, History or Languages.

People who take this course often go on to study Drama at university, either on its own, or in combination with another subject. Drama is part of a degree course with English and Education at Homerton College in Cambridge, for example. Other popular destinations for recent Theatre Studies students are Exeter, Leeds, Warwick, East Anglia, Bristol and Royal Holloway. Afterwards, some pursue careers as actors, writers or directors, or go in other directions (musicians, teachers, broadcasters, journalists, filmmakers). Some go straight to specialist drama schools such as Rose Bruford College with a view to making a career as actors.

JH Taylor ([jeremy.taylor@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:jeremy.taylor@abingdon.org.uk))

# ECONOMICS

AQA GCE in Economics (Course code 2140: 1141 for AS and 2141 for A2)  
[web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/business/economics\\_overview.php?id=05&prev=05](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/business/economics_overview.php?id=05&prev=05)

Prospective pupils sometimes think that Economics is about making money, the Stock Market or how to run a business. These are common misconceptions; Economics is an academically rigorous A-level that explores issues such as economic growth, unemployment, inflation, trade, government policy, globalisation, the single currency, unions, cost structures, profits and optimising behaviour. The subject is therefore varied, and addresses issues of contemporary relevance. Traditionally, economics is divided into two areas: micro and macroeconomics. The former concentrates upon the actions of the individual decision maker, such as the consumer, firm or worker, whilst the latter focuses upon the collective actions of economic agents in areas such as government, and national and international economies.

The AS Economics course has two units. The microeconomics unit (Markets and Market Failure) starts by constructing a theoretical blueprint of the free market system, but the second part of the module explains why governments often intervene in the market system (given that economies seldom work with the seamless perfection of the textbook case). This module also applies economic theory to the behaviour of the agricultural, health, oil and commodity markets. The macroeconomics unit (the National Economy) focuses on the economic objectives of government (low inflation, high growth, low unemployment and long run balance of payments equilibrium) and the weapons available to achieve these goals. Both AS modules are assessed using a mixture of multiple choice and data response questions. The upper sixth course has two A2 units and these modules explore the topics developed in the Lower Sixth at a higher level; the issues of Globalisation and the European Union are underlying themes in each A2 module. At A2, the pattern of assessment for each module is one data response question (from a choice of two) and one essay (from a choice of three).

To help pupils apply economic theory to real life, the department makes significant use of newspaper articles, video, the internet and the school's Virtual Learning Environment. An overseas trip tends to take place every other year, and recent examples include Strasbourg, Poland and New York. In addition, day trips to places such as Jaguar Cars, Chelsea Football Club, Coca Cola and BMW Mini bring some realism to the theoretical issues explored in class. In general, there are no right or wrong subject combinations with Economics (though we do not allow pupils to combine Economics with Business Studies). Economics fits easily with a wide variety of subjects because it combines the theoretical rigour of the sciences with the independence of mind fostered by the arts. At A-level pupils never have to deal with complicated formulae, but they must be able to think logically and in the abstract. However, if a pupil is thinking of reading *pure* Economics at university, it is advisable to study Mathematics to at least AS level, and Further Mathematics may convey a *marginal* advantage for *some* universities (the importance of mathematics varies between university departments). For Joint Honours courses, an A grade at GCSE Maths may well suffice. Good economists must be able to think logically, express themselves clearly and have an interest in global issues. In the words of John Maynard Keynes: "Economics is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of the mind, a technique of thinking which helps its possessor to draw correct conclusions".

SJ Grills ([simon.grills@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:simon.grills@abingdon.org.uk))

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

AQA GCE in English Literature B (1746 for AS and 2746 for A2).  
[store.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/pdf/AQA-2745-W-SP-10.PDF](http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/pdf/AQA-2745-W-SP-10.PDF)

English Literature at A Level is different to the GCSE in English insofar as it focuses exclusively on the study of literature. Pupils studying English Literature at A Level find it a stimulating and rewarding experience to read more challenging texts than those on offer at GCSE, to approach these texts from different theoretical perspectives, and to position literature within a broader intellectual context.

We follow the AQA B syllabus as it offers the best preparation for study at university, and most successfully encourages pupils to think conceptually about writing, literary theory, and the relationships between the two. Pupils read a wonderfully wide range of texts, including post-1990 novels. Individual texts studied will change each year, but, as a guide, pupils in the Sixth Form are currently studying *The God Of Small Things*, *Enduring Love*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *Dracula*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Kite Runner*, *Rabbit Run*, *The White Devil*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Hamlet*, *The Pardoner's Tale*, *The Bloody Chamber*, *Waiting for Godot*, Robert Browning, W H Auden, John Keats, and a broad range of pastoral poetry. In addition, the A2 coursework unit, "Further and Independent Reading" actively encourages pupils to read, study and write about texts of their own choosing.

We expect pupils studying English Literature to be willing readers, confident writers, ready to express a point of view and to undertake independent work. The course will help pupils to develop the essential adult skills of arguing and discussing in a clear and logical way, orally and on paper, and of being able to make sensitive and informed discriminations. The English sets are not streamed, and are taught by two members of the English department each year.

The English Department also places a large emphasis on co-curricular classes and activities. Twice a week, staff lead classes in a Literary Society that offers opportunities for Sixth Form boys to stretch themselves academically while gaining a sense of the scope and variety of English Literature. There are also twice weekly Creative Writing classes that build up to pupils producing their own creative writing magazine each year. Trips to theatres and lectures are regularly arranged and we have just launched "Writers at Abingdon", a programme that involves writers from different genres visiting School each term.

English traditionally stands with Mathematics as one of the two most generally useful A levels. It goes very well with classical and modern languages and with History, Geography and Economics. It is an obviously complementary subject to the sciences and is particularly useful for intending medical school applicants, for those aiming for Law, and for PPE candidates. In Upper School English classes there is a good blend of those pupils who will continue studying English at university and those specializing in other subjects who recognise the importance of refining their analytical skills and the precision of their written expression. An English degree leads to a surprising range of careers: it is largely regarded as evidence of a trained and reflective mind.

KT Carson ([kevin.carson@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:kevin.carson@abingdon.org.uk))

# GEOGRAPHY

OCR GCE in Geography (OCR H083)

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/hss/geography/index.aspx](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/hss/geography/index.aspx)

Geography is a highly respected discipline both within the school and at university. Geography graduates are among the most employable as they possess transferable skills which are sought after by employers. Geography tackles many contemporary issues that are relevant to society today:

- environmental responsibility
- global interdependence
- cultural understanding and tolerance
- commerce, trade and industry.

Geography is a popular option in the sixth form at Abingdon and in recent years the department has achieved excellent results. Many sixth formers choose to read Geography or a geographically related degree course subsequently at university.

The AS course content:

The emphasis of the AS course is towards management of environments. Contrasts and linkage between the study of human and physical geography is emphasised throughout the AS course. There are two papers at AS level. The first covers three physical environments (coastal, river and cold environments), and the second paper covers three human environments (managing urban change, the energy issue and the growth of tourism). Two field trips will be arranged during the Michaelmas term, one to the Christchurch Bay on the south coast and the other to the Olympic sites in London. Both papers consist of a combination of structured data response questions and essays. There is NO coursework in either the AS or the A2 specification.

The A2 course content:

There are two papers for this part of the course.

Paper 1.

Global Issues: Many modern contemporary issues are covered in this paper.

The following topics will be studied in depth:

- Earth Hazards
- Globalisation
- Development and inequalities.

This paper will include decision-making exercises and essays.

Paper 2.

Geographical Skills: in this paper candidates are expected to develop knowledge and understanding of the process of geographical research and suitable skills – this will include GIS, remote sensing and other ICT applications. To help prepare for this paper there is a two-day field trip to Studland Bay during the Michaelmas term. In addition, in association with Map Action (<http://www.mapaction.org/>), we organise a hazard simulation response day within Abingdon.

The department organises a field trip towards the end of the summer holiday of the lower sixth, where the emphasis is on topic enhancement for the Global Issues paper and field work experience for the Geographical Skills paper. Following the success of our initial trip to Iceland in 2009, we intend to run the same itinerary in 2011.

Geography can be studied in combination with most subjects in the sixth form. Maths, Economics, Biology, Chemistry, Politics certainly complement geography very well.

IC Fishpool ([ian.fishpool@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:ian.fishpool@abingdon.org.uk))

# GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Edexcel GCE in Government and Politics (8GP01 for AS and 9GP01 for A2)

[www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/gov/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/gov/Pages/default.aspx)

How democratic is our government?  
Does our voting system produce a fair result?  
Is the Prime Minister turning into a powerful president?  
Is Parliament still useful?  
Are our rights secure?  
Have we surrendered our independence to Europe?

If such questions could interest you then you would enjoy Government and Politics!

AS

There are 2 modules:

People and Politics – democracy, representation, parties, pressure groups, political ideologies.

Governing the UK – the nature and fundamental principles of the UK constitution; types of government; the roles and powers of executive (PM, Cabinet etc.); legislature (parliament), and judiciary (judges and court system)

A2

There are a further 2 modules:

Key Themes in Political Analysis (liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism)

Extended Themes in Political Analysis (nationalism, feminism, multiculturalism and ecologism)

No previous knowledge of government and politics is required although some knowledge of history is immensely helpful and you must be really keen to follow current events.

This subject could appeal to “scientists” or “artists” and complement and support particularly well History, Geography, Economics and Religious Studies.

E Poole ([epoole@shsk.org.uk](mailto:epoole@shsk.org.uk))  
The School of St Helen and St Katharine

# HISTORY

OCR GCE in History A (Units F961/B and F964 at AS and F966/B and F965 at A2)

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/history/a/documents/index.aspx](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/history/a/documents/index.aspx)

At Abingdon we follow the OCR AS/A2 course GCE History A course. Each student will study two modules in each year with a different teacher and the teaching week will be divided between the two modules. In total the students cover four modules. The department is well resourced and the teaching is lively and enthusiastic. The teaching staff are knowledgeable and have a real passion for their subject and students should enjoy themselves as well as learn a lot.

In the lower-sixth students will study either the French Revolution or Italian Unification for a Documents Paper that will end in an hour and a half exam at AS. This is primarily a source-based paper so will require good analytical skills combined with the ability to write well. There will be some extended writing required for the final question in the paper. The students will also have to do a Period-Studies paper-they will be asked to focus on British 19<sup>th</sup> century political history or British Imperial History in the late nineteenth century. The exam consists of two essays on the subject studied so will require good recall of information and the ability to organize written responses to specific questions. Both modules will require extensive reading around the class topics and pupils should be prepared for this.

In the upper sixth year the students will study two modules. One of these is a Themes paper-the topics studied are Russia 1856-1964 or Civil Rights in the USA or the Changing Nature of Warfare. These are all synoptic papers that require students to understand the broad sweep of history over a hundred-year period. The examination is one and a half hours and consists of the students writing two essays on the period. The other module students study is the Interpretations/Investigations paper and this consists of pupils having to look at a period of history and the historical interpretations that historians have given to particular aspects of the period and historical controversies therein. Students will then have to do an extended Interpretations essay of 2000 words analysing four sources. They will then have to complete a further coursework essay of 2000 words on one topic related to this period they find interesting. We currently offer the Causes of World War Two and Napoleon.

The subject combines well with any of the other Humanities subjects such as English or Geography but also with Modern Languages and Classics. We often get students doing science subjects choosing to do History at AS and some of them continue to study it at A2. Students go onto study History at university but it is also useful for students hoping to study Law/PPE/PPP and various other courses that require good literacy and analytical skills. The department run Study Days to London and also offers a well-attended series of lectures in the History Society for students who want to engage with the subject at a deeper level. We are also well resourced with excellent ICT and library facilities.

DR McGill ([david.mcgill@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:david.mcgill@abingdon.org.uk))

# MATHEMATICS

OCR GCE in Mathematics (3890 at AS and 7890 at A2) and Further Mathematics (3892 at AS and 7892 at A2)

[http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as\\_alevelgce/mathematics\\_mei/index.html](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as_alevelgce/mathematics_mei/index.html)

Mathematics is one of the most generally useful A level subjects, fitting with many combinations of other subjects. It is essential for physicists and engineers, valuable to chemists, biologists, economists and geographers, and can help to broaden the education of those taking arts subjects. However, it is also a fascinating subject in its own right. Mathematics is recognised as requiring a logical and rational approach as well as demanding dedication and determination to be successful. Research into graduate careers has shown Mathematics graduates to be amongst the highest earners after graduation.

Abingdon is a lively place to study Mathematics. All students of Maths at Abingdon have the chance to attend lectures given by outside speakers and to take part in visiting Maths workshops.

All Further Maths students take part in the Senior Maths Challenge competition, with a separate team being prepared for the Senior Team Maths Challenge, both administered by the UK Maths Trust. Over recent years Abingdon has consistently been amongst the regional winners in this competition, progressing to the National Finals on two occasions. We also prepare a team for the Princeton Maths Challenge competition - a week-long competition which requires the production of proofs for some rather fiendish problems.

Further Mathematicians are also given the opportunity to study for the extension STEP papers in both the Lower and Upper Sixth, and preparation and support is given.

Success at A level is dependent on a good understanding of concepts studied in GCSE or IGCSE. Fluency in algebra is very important as is a general enthusiasm to tackle mathematical problems. Understanding in mathematics often takes time to develop, so boys need to be willing to persevere and ready to practise techniques.

## **Choosing Single Maths or Further Maths at Abingdon**

There are two different and independent routes to studying Maths at Abingdon – the Single Maths route, and the Further Maths route. Each counts as one choice. It is quite possible to start on the Further Maths route and move onto the Single Maths route but almost impossible the other way round.

## **Single Maths**

The lower sixth single mathematics course leads to an AS in Mathematics, which consists of three units – Core 1, Core 2 and Mechanics 1. These units are examined at the end of the lower sixth. In the upper sixth, pupils study two more core units - Core 3 and Core 4 and Statistics 1. These units are examined at the end of the upper sixth.

Core mathematics covers topics including algebraic techniques, calculus and trigonometry. The applied units (Statistics 1 and Mechanics 1) look at how mathematical techniques can be used to model the external world - statistics examines situations which include an element of randomness and how probabilistic conclusions can be drawn in these situations, while mechanics examines motion and the forces which cause motion.

## **Further Mathematics**

This course is intended for able mathematicians. It leads to two A levels: Mathematics and Further Mathematics. It is a very rapidly paced and challenging course. It is highly recommended for those who may later be considering university courses or careers in fields including mathematics, the sciences, computation or engineering.

Many of those who study Further Mathematics have already studied the Core 1 and Core 2 modules or an equivalent, such as Additional Maths, although this is not an absolute requirement for entry to the course. Students who have studied beyond the GCSE or IGCSE syllabus should start on this faster route.

Further Mathematics gives an opportunity to develop greater breadth in techniques of algebra, trigonometry and calculus, plus giving the opportunity to look at more diverse topics such as complex numbers, polar coordinates and series. In addition students extend their study of Mechanics and Statistics. Some students have also studied units in Decision Maths.

Boys studying Further Mathematics typically have two more lessons per week than single subject mathematicians. At least six units (the equivalent of one A level in maths if 'cashed in') will be completed by the end of the lower sixth. The lower sixth units are examined at the end of the lower sixth. The upper sixth course will include six more units. These units are examined at the end of the upper sixth.

VD Penrose ([vanessa.penrose@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:vanessa.penrose@abingdon.org.uk))

# MODERN LANGUAGES: French, German and Spanish

AQA: French A(1651 AS 2651 A2) German A(1661 AS 2661 A2)

Spanish A(1696 AS 2696 A2)

[web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/french\\_materials.php?id=09&prev=](http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/french_materials.php?id=09&prev=)

A language qualification is at a premium in a country notoriously short of good linguists and it will make you highly employable in a vast range of professions. An A level languages course also provides a challenging academic training and a stepping stone to further study. As well as enhancing your CV, understanding and speaking a foreign language will enrich your life. You will be able to read novels, poems, plays and articles in a foreign language and watch foreign films in the original version. You will be able to travel around French, German and Spanish speaking countries, meeting and talking to people in their own language and discovering the historical and cultural heritage of the country. If you are considering a gap year abroad, perhaps in South America or at a ski resort, an A Level in French, German or Spanish can only be a bonus. On the employment front, being able to converse with clients in their own language will give you the edge in any business role. Moreover, as a linguist, you will easily be able to work abroad.

There are eight topic areas, which are discussed both from a general point of view and from in a specifically French/ German/ Spanish context.

**AS:** media, popular culture, healthy living/ lifestyle, family relationships

**A2:** environment, multicultural society, contemporary social issues, plus two cultural topics, such as the study of a foreign language novel, play, artist, film director or historical period.

A Level groups are taught for a total of eight lessons a week by two members of staff. You will learn about the language in more depth, broaden your vocabulary and improve your understanding of grammar. You will find about French/ German/ Spanish culture and history and learn to discuss issues in the target language. You will speak in the target language as much as possible in every lesson and you will have the opportunity to work regularly in small groups with our foreign language assistants. As well as the text book, we use television programmes, films, material from the web, magazine articles, etc. You will be encouraged to read magazines and newspapers and to surf the net for up-to-date information. You will be introduced to literature in the language you are studying – novels, plays and poems. You will discuss news items and do project work. You will be encouraged to visit France/ Germany and Spain, either by your own arrangement or through the department's study trips to France, Spain and Germany. Our Modern Languages Society, in conjunction with St Helen's, organises various events, such as visits to the theatre or cinema and food tasting.

Assessment is by examination at the end of each year. There are two AS units: **Unit 1** Listening, Reading and Writing and **Unit 2** Speaking and two A2 units: **Unit 3** Listening, Reading and Writing and **Unit 4** Speaking

An AS or A2 qualification in foreign languages can lead to many different possibilities at university. You can study a traditional modern languages degree, usually two languages - whether two that you have studied to A Level eg: French with German or Spanish – or one language you have already studied combined with a new language such as Russian, Italian, Arabic or Mandarin. You can also combine a language with other subjects such as Business, Law and Engineering. All these courses usually involve a year spent studying or working abroad. Even if you do not study languages at university, with a languages A Level you will be able to spend an 'Erasmus year' abroad studying your subject at a European university. If you want to apply for Oxford and Cambridge language degree courses, Abingdon provides extra classes during which you will study classic literary works and explore grammatical concepts more deeply.

J Jennings ([jayne.jennings@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:jayne.jennings@abingdon.org.uk))

# MUSIC

OCR GCE in Music (H142 for AS and H542 for A2)

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/l\\_gce/amlw/music/index.aspx](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/l_gce/amlw/music/index.aspx)

Abingdon is proud of its musical heritage and reputation as a leading school music department of the local area and further afield. This is reflected in the relatively large numbers of candidates who opt for Music as an A Level subject at Abingdon – a typical year group comprises six to ten boys in each of the sixth form years. For experienced musicians, the course offers an opportunity to understand at a deeper level the music that they are playing regularly in ensembles and as soloists.

All potential candidates should have at least one major practical study (instrumental or vocal). All boys will be expected to take a lively active part in the school's music-making in both vocal and instrumental fields. Choral experience is considered an essential aspect of the musicianship required to perform well in the aural section of the historical studies written papers.

The course develops further than the three areas of musical experience targeted at GCSE, namely performing (40%), composing (30%), and listening (30%). The new OCR course, in common with other A Level syllabuses, gives slightly extra weight in the performing module at both AS and A2.

The **performing module** is assessed by a visiting examiner and falls into two sections at AS (first and second studies and viva voce discussion). At A2 a longer recital is required and the viva voce discussion explores aspects of the interpretation given and the preparation undertaken. These recitals take place towards the end of the Lent Term.

The **composing module** embraces both original composing techniques (taught by Abingdon's Composer in Residence) and stylistic techniques requiring the understanding of tonal techniques of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Portfolios of compositions and exercises are submitted in early May.

The **historical studies** module is assessed through a written examination at both AS (2 hours) and A2 (2 hrs 30 mins). Both papers have a compulsory aural section and historical topics; at AS, orchestral music and jazz and, at A2, a range of options, including solo song from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The paper at A2 generally requires longer answers.

The department's many concerts and large variety of ensembles offer essential experience, as well as concerts, opera trips and masterclasses, which enhance musical understanding and matters of interpretation.

Music A Level is a subject that mixes well with a range of others including arts and sciences and over the years in addition to music, boys have gone on to read a wide variety of subjects at university, including Law, Medicine, Maths, Science, Languages, Art etc. Good university music departments exist at Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, York, Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham, London, Southampton, Nottingham and others. Abingdon boys regularly gain places and awards (choral and organ) at Oxbridge. Careers in music include Publishing, Teaching, The Media, and Performing but employers in many fields increasingly value the creative and communicative skills that are developed through the study and performance of music.

MA Stinton ([michael.stinton@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:michael.stinton@abingdon.org.uk))

# PHYSICS

OCR specification A (H158 for AS and H558 at A2)

[www.ocr.org.uk/download/kd/ocr\\_9587\\_kd\\_gce\\_spec.pdf](http://www.ocr.org.uk/download/kd/ocr_9587_kd_gce_spec.pdf)

Modern physics is built on older foundations. It follows that the excitement of quantum mechanics and particle physics can only be appreciated in the light of a good knowledge of mechanics, waves, and electricity: all are to be found in both the AS and A2 levels. Physics is the fundamental science on which our understanding of atoms and energy is based. It is therefore useful for any career from games designer to astronaut as well as the more obvious areas of engineering and physics. In our increasingly technological world physics is crucial to the understanding of medical diagnosis and treatment.

All the written papers start with short answer questions and move on to structured questions. The A2 papers all have a synoptic aspect, which refers back to work previously covered.

In the lower sixth there are three modules, including a practical coursework module:

Unit G481: Mechanics covers motion, forces in action, work and energy.

Unit G482: Electrons, Waves and Photons covers electric current, resistance, DC circuits, waves and an introduction to quantum physics.

Unit G483: Practical Skills in Physics 1. This practical skills unit is teacher assessed and externally moderated by OCR. Candidates are assessed on one task from each of the following categories: qualitative, quantitative and evaluative tasks.

Similarly there are three A2 Units:

Unit G484: The Newtonian World covers Newton's laws, momentum, circular motion and oscillations and thermal physics.

Unit G485: Fields, Particles and Frontiers of Physics includes electric and magnetic fields capacitors and exponential decay, nuclear physics, medical imaging and astronomy.

Unit G486 Practical Skills in Physics 2. This practical skills unit is teacher assessed and externally moderated by OCR. Candidates are assessed on one task from each of the following categories: qualitative, quantitative and evaluative tasks.

It does not matter if a candidate has done double award science or single subject physics, but it is obviously easier for a candidate with single subject physics. It is more important that a candidate shows their ability by getting good GCSE grades. To succeed at physics A-level it is expected that a candidate has a good grounding in mathematics. A-level maths helps, but is not essential for A-level physics, however University courses in physics and engineering will usually expect mathematics A-level as well.

The department offers regular lectures on aspects of physics and engineering as well as occasional trips to offer further study.

JPG Brooks ([john.brooks@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:john.brooks@abingdon.org.uk))

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES (Philosophy and Ethics)

OCR GCE Religious Studies: AS: H172 units G571/G572; A2: H572 units G581/G582  
<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/gce/hss/rs/index.aspx>

At Abingdon, A-Level Religious Studies is the study of Philosophy and Ethics, which over the years has proved an increasingly popular and successful course. To succeed at A-Level a religious studies or equivalent GCSE is not necessary. The course requires no specific religious commitment, and can be studied by anyone with an enquiring mind. It certainly helps if you are willing to explore new ideas and discuss issues.

It is a challenging academic subject that requires critical thinking and constructive argument, both orally and on paper. As such it is relevant and useful for all academic subjects and future careers. It has an affinity with many other AS and A2 subjects. For example, it shares subject matter with the sciences, and processes of thought and argument with the humanities and mathematics. It is useful and relevant to all manner of university courses and careers. Students are encouraged to attend the Edmund society, and there are twice yearly trips to conferences in Oxford led by Peter Vardy.

At AS Level, we study two papers: one on Philosophy and one on Ethics. The Philosophy course begins where philosophy itself begins: with Plato and Aristotle. Then it looks at the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures on the concept of God before studying a range of classical arguments for God's existence. It ends the Lower Sixth with some challenges to belief in God: the problem of evil and the challenges of science. It is a wonderfully wide introduction to the subject, providing a very full foundation for further study. The Ethics course begins with a basic introduction to moral philosophy, before covering the most significant ethical theories: Natural Law, Kant and Utilitarianism. The specifically Christian approach to ethics is then analysed before considering how the theory can be applied to questions raised by abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and war and peace. It provides a very focused foundation to the subject. It might be also of special interest to a potential medic. The form of assessment is an intermediary step between GCSE and A2. Questions are divided into two parts (rather than four at GCSE), which involve more extended writing than at GCSE.

At A2 Level, the Philosophy course broadens to cover a range of topics of relevance to the study of religious philosophy: Religious language; religious experience including arguments concerning miracles; aspects of the nature of God as omnipotent, omniscient, judge etc; and questions as to the nature and reality of life after death. The wide range enables students to get a full grasp of the breadth of the subject. The Ethics course begins by looking at meta-ethics, a pure form of moral philosophy, before embarking on a study of two topics related to ethical theory: determinism and conscience. It adds a last ethical theory, virtue ethics, before applying all theory studied in the course to the challenging questions of the environment, business ethics and sexual morality. The wide range between subtle philosophical ideas and practical application provides a challenging and practical course. Questions are answered with a single piece of extended writing.

GR Moody ([george.moody@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:george.moody@abingdon.org.uk))