

To all fifth year pupils and their parents

30 November 2009

TENTATIVE PREFERENCE FOR SIXTH FORM SUBJECTS

This document outlines in brief the process for choosing A level subjects for next year. A fuller description is found in "The Sixth Form" document available on the curriculum area of the school website (<http://www.abingdon.org.uk/curriculum/>).

1. Sixth Form Entry Qualification

Now is the time to consider the subjects that you wish to study in the sixth form and your career options. 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 *from within the school*, you will need GCSE passes **at grade A in at least three subjects, grade B in two subjects and grade C in a further two subjects, including English and Maths**. Pupils who do not reach this level, and who wish to be considered for a sixth form place, are interviewed by the headmaster shortly after the GCSE results are published. You should plan your holiday arrangements accordingly.

2. How the A levels are structured.

Each A level has four units or 'modules'. Two of these units will be pitched at a lower level, and may be amalgamated into an AS (advanced subsidiary level) for which a grade can be awarded. When combined with the two, more advanced, A2 units the overall qualification gained is an A level. (Mathematics is structured differently, having 3 AS units and 3 A2 units).

3. Number and selection of A-level subjects

At Abingdon, we wish you to express a preference for *four subjects*, and to assume that you will be studying all four throughout the sixth form, for the whole two years. Some Abingdon pupils study all four subjects for two years. Sixth form tutors, however, will keep an eye on the situation and some pupils may study three subjects in the upper sixth. Our aim will be to create the sixth form curriculum which is most appropriate to each individual. One of the aims of the earlier reforms of the A level was to create more breadth of sixth form study. You might bear this in mind when choosing your subjects.

4. The range of sixth form subjects.

The available A level subjects at Abingdon are Ancient History, Art & Design, History Of Art, Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Design & Technology, Drama & Theatre Studies, Economics, English Literature, French, German, Geography, Government & Politics, Greek, History, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Physics, Religious Studies & Spanish. Two of these subjects are currently taught at the School of St Helen And St Katharine (Government & Politics, and History of Art), and some others are taught in conjunction with that school (Drama & Theatre Studies, German).

We do not allow pupils to study both Business Studies and Economics.

Pupils may study **either** Mathematics **or** Further Mathematics, but not both.

At this stage we welcome preferences for any combination of subjects. When the timetable is constructed, however, there are always some pupils with subject combinations that are difficult to fit in. We shall inform you and your parents as early as possible if this seems likely to be the case.

5. The elements of the Sixth Form timetable.

Your lower sixth timetable has two main components. First, you will be studying four main A level subjects, usually for a total of 32 lessons a week. Secondly, the remaining lessons include one of compulsory General Studies, some optional General Studies courses, extra further mathematics lessons if appropriate, and supervised private study. The General Studies courses will be selected on the first day of your sixth form career.

6. General Studies.

The sixth form involves more than the study of specialist subjects in depth. Your experience will be enriched in General Studies by contact with fields of study different from your A level subjects, covering a wide range of issues from key life skills to complementary studies that enhance your university applications. For example, you might choose to take up a new language to GCSE.

7. Seeking guidance.

Your task is to combine the information, opinions and guidance available to you from your parents, your tutor, your subject teachers, the master in charge of university entrance and grades required for entry to higher education (Mr Mearns), the master in charge of careers (Dr Gibbs) and the ISCO tests. If you have any queries about the suitability for you of any particular subject course, consult your teacher in that subject and/or the head of department concerned.

8. Timescale and deadlines

You are asked to complete the Fifth Year Tentative Preferences webform online by **Monday 7 December. Each boy has been sent the link to this form via his school email account.** If you have difficulty filling out the webform then ask your tutor for a paper form. This deadline is necessary to allow early planning of the timetable and staffing for the next academic year. After mocks, early next term, there will be a parents' evening, and then you will be asked for a 'final' preferences by mid February 2010.

If you are unsure about your subjects, please list on the webform the other subjects you are seriously considering.

Yours faithfully,

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