



ABINGDON

## A Parent's Guide to Career Guidance at Abingdon School

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### INTRODUCTION

Abingdon School's Career Guidance Programme takes pupils aged 12-18 (Year 8 to Year 13) on a journey of self-discovery, helping them to identify potential careers to which they are well suited, understand and experience the world of work, make educational choices informed by careers planning, and learn key skills needed in education and employment. In short, our goal is to help every pupil think carefully about, and take practical steps towards realising, his future career.

The Career Guidance Programme combines online career information resources with career thinking/planning lessons; employability skills workshops; CV, cover letter and interview training; one-to-one guidance meetings, and a wide range of events and activities, including talks by working professionals, an annual careers fair, several career advice evenings, two work experience schemes, and meetings with British Armed Forces careers advisers. The career guidance section of the pupil intranet (Firefly) is a 'one-stop-shop' of links to recommended web sites for researching educational and career choices and finding work experience schemes, enrichment programmes, and traineeships, apprenticeships and other work-based learning options for school leavers.

Every Year group enjoys a set of bespoke activities designed for its step in this journey, with one Year's activities smoothly transitioning into that of the next Year. This design ensures coherence from Year to Year and puts pupils in the best position possible to make informed educational choices at the end of each key stage in their education: GSCE, A-Level, and all post-18 options, including Higher Education.

Supporting the delivery of the Career Guidance Programme are teachers, tutors, parents and Old Abingdonians as well as selected suppliers of career education, information, advice, and guidance.

Michael Triff serves as Head of Career Guidance, responsible for designing, delivering and evaluating the Career Guidance Programme. He is always interested to hear your views. Email: [careerguidance@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:careerguidance@abingdon.org.uk).

## Activities by Year Group

### 2nd Year (8, age 12-13, KS3, Lower School): c70 pupils

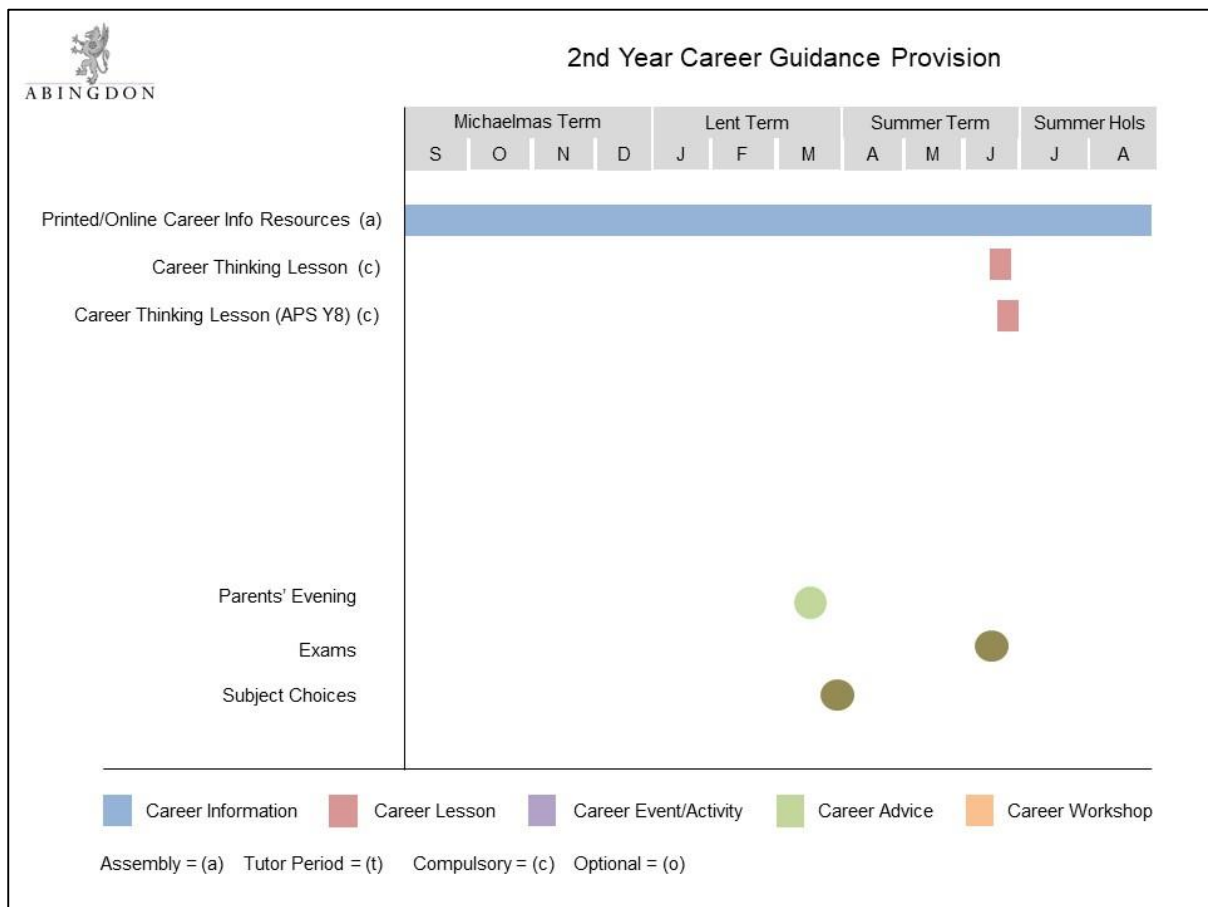
Career guidance is first introduced in 2nd Year, with a light programme of activities.

In January, the Head of Career Guidance speaks at a Lower School Assembly to inform all pupils of the **printed materials** that are available to them in the main school library and the **online** resources on the pupil intranet (Firefly).

After 2nd Year exams are completed in June, the Head of Career Guidance delivers a lesson called '**Career Thinking**' to each 2nd Year tutor group. Through facilitated discussions and a range of group activities, pupils explore these six questions:

- What is a career?
- What does working and pursuing a career involve?
- What might a career look like over the course of one's working life?
- When does one start a career?
- What kinds of jobs are there?
- What's important to think about and do over the next 2-3 years (in Middle School)?

A similar lesson is delivered in June to Year 8 pupils at Abingdon Prep School.



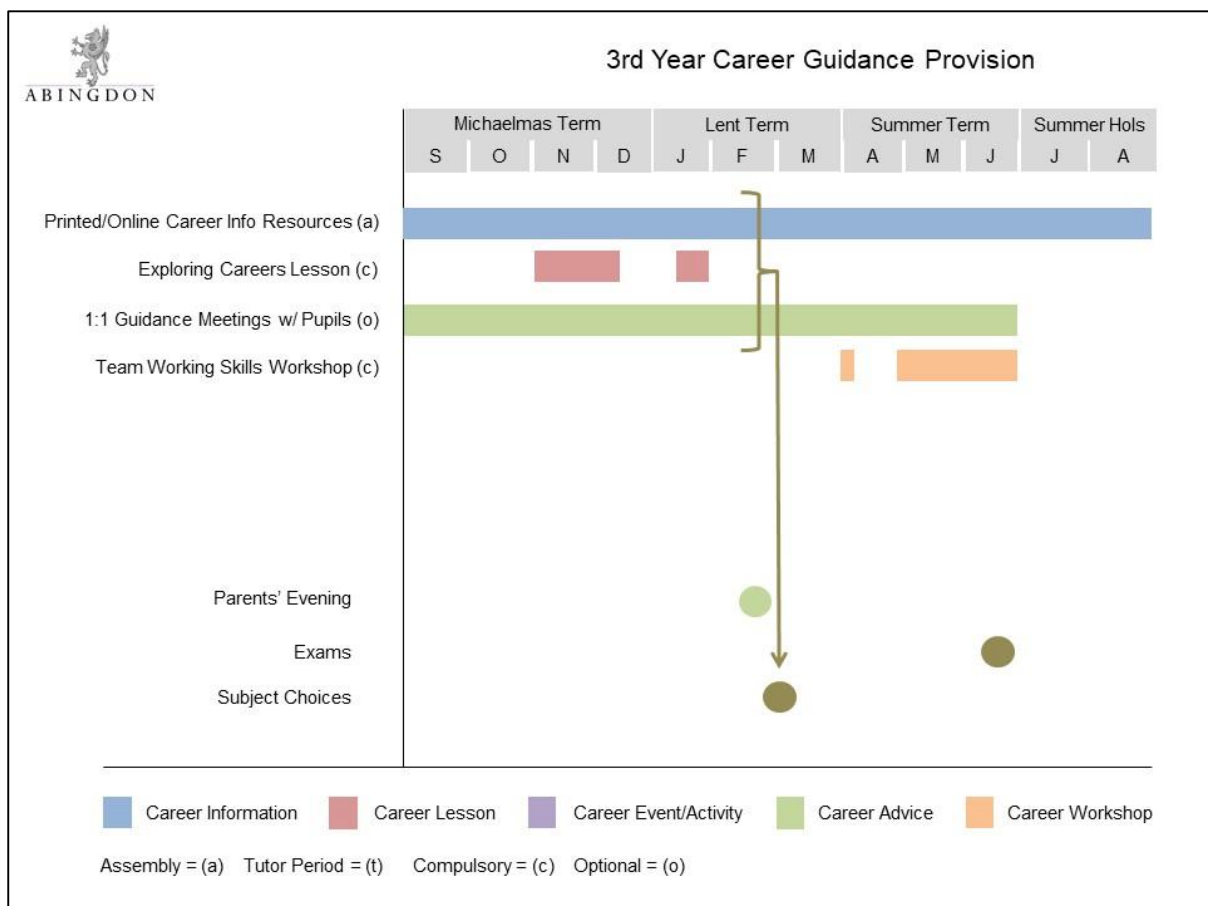
### 3rd Year (9, age 13-14, KS3, Middle School): c190 pupils

Career guidance takes on more significance for the first time in 3rd Year, when Year groups reach their full size and cohorts are complete.

In September, the Head of Career Guidance speaks at 3rd Year Assembly to inform all new pupils (and remind all returning pupils) of the **printed materials** that are available to them in the main school library and **online** resources on the pupil intranet (Firefly).

Starting after October half-term, every 3rd Year pupil attends an 'Exploring Careers' lesson in which they are introduced to a 'Framework for Exploring Careers'. This framework helps pupils to understand six different dimensions through which to explore a career. They learn how to use this framework to create a 'personal criteria' for what is important to them - what they want from their career - and then use that criteria to research and assess different careers. A group activity then explores a wide range of careers through which pupils learn how these careers are similar to and different from one another in important ways. Equipped with new analytical skills, pupils can continue their own independent career research with a view to making career-informed GCSE subject choices in late February. They can also schedule 1:1 meetings with the Head of Career Guidance.

Starting in late Lent Term, 3rd Year pupils receive training in **Team Working** skills, which become especially critical during GCSE Years.



### 4th Year (10, age 14-15, KS4, Middle School): c190 pupils

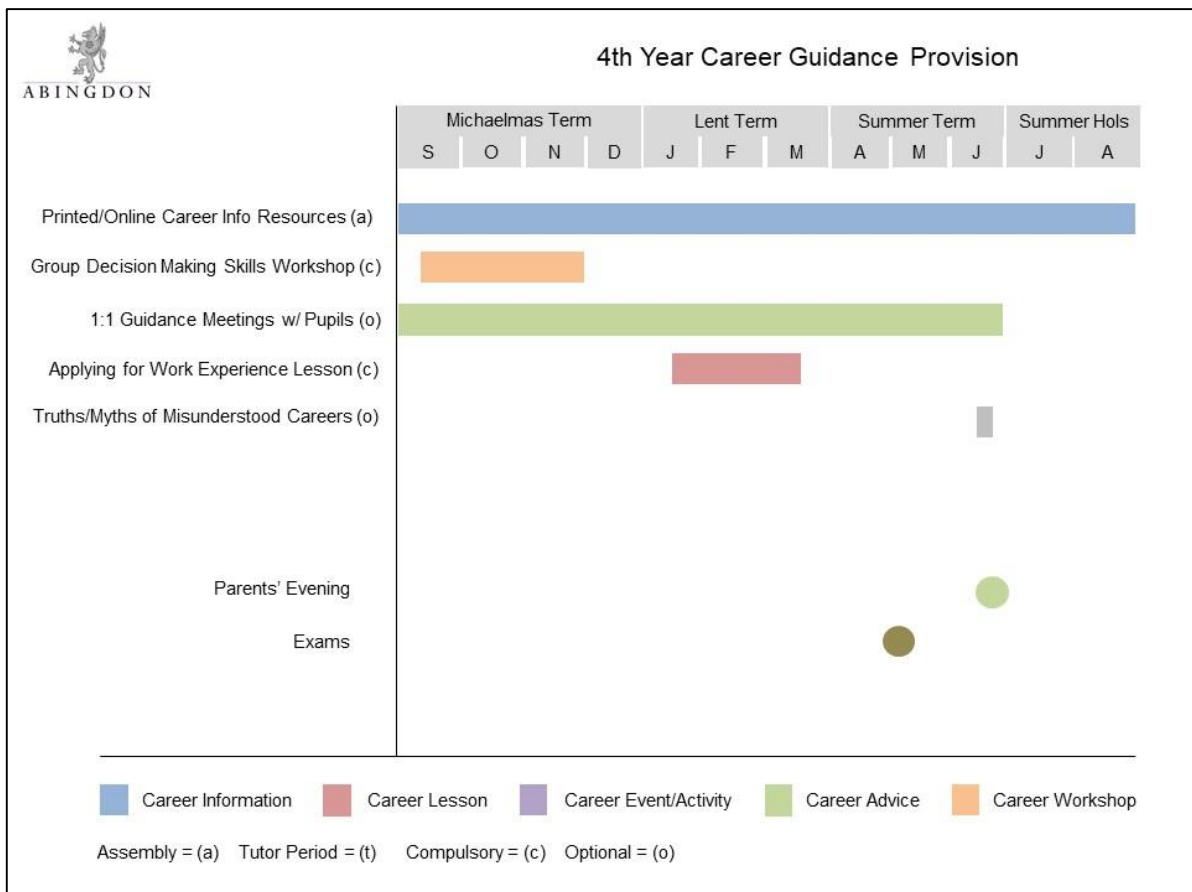
The focus of career guidance in 4th Year is to help pupils build additional GCSE-critical soft skills, clarify and refine potential career directions (in so far as is natural), and prepare for the following Year's work experience programme.

In Michaelmas term, 4th Year pupils receive training in **Group Decision Making** skills, which are critical during GCSE Years, especially for academic group project work and various 'Other Half' activities and competitions.

Throughout the Year, 4th Year pupils continue to have access to the career resources that are available to them in the main school library and on the pupil intranet (Firefly). They can also schedule **1:1 meetings** with the Head of Career Guidance.

In Lent Term, every 4th Year pupil attends an '**Applying for Work Experience**' lesson in which they learn how to write a CV and Cover Letter. Pupils can get feedback from the Head of Career Guidance on drafts of their CV and Cover Letter, which they will use to secure a work experience placement in 5th Year.

Finally, in June, pupils and parents can attend an evening event called '**The Truths and Myths Behind Often Misunderstood Careers**' which helps to affirm truths and debunk myths about a range of popular, if often misunderstood, careers which boys may be considering (but potentially should reconsider) before making A-Level subject choices in 5th Year.



## 5th Year (11, age 15-16, KS4, Middle School): c180 pupils

5th Year pupils have many opportunities to engage in Abingdon's Career Guidance Programme; 5th Year is a very important Year in terms of choosing A-Level subjects and preparing for the Sixth Form, getting first-time experience of the world of work, and deepening an understanding of potential future careers.

Given that tentative A-Level subject choices are made in late November of 5th Year, early in Michaelmas term, pupils complete a '**Career Profiling Programme**'. Pupils first complete a series of online questionnaires about their interests, skills, lifestyle preferences, motivations, and personality. Based on the answers given, the online system generates a list of potential occupations that would appear to be well matched to the pupil along with key information that explains why. Pupils then have a one-to-one meeting with an independent and experienced career adviser to discuss the matched occupations as well as implications on A-Level subject that may be required or useful for entering the matched occupations. This service is offered for a fee on an opt-out basis by an external career guidance supplier.

5th Year pupils continue to have access to the career resources that are available to them in the main school library and on the pupil intranet (Firefly). For pupils interested in discussing further the findings of their career profiling programme, and implications for A-Level subject choices, the Head of Career Guidance is available for follow-up **1:1 Meetings**.

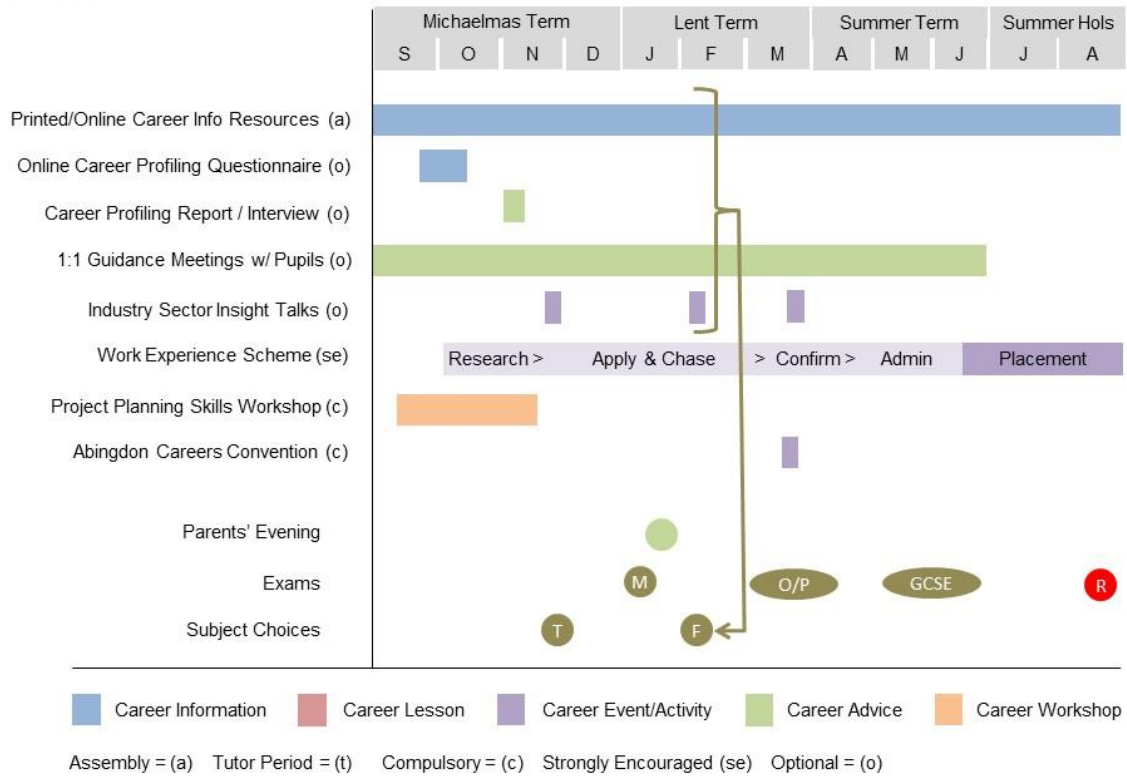
Kicking off at the beginning of the Year, and continuing in stages throughout, is a 5th Year **Work Experience Scheme**, strongly encouraged for all 5th Year pupils. Pupils are charged with finding their own placement and undertaking the placement for one or two weeks immediately after completion of their GCSE exams in Summer Term.

The annual **Abingdon Career Convention**, jointly run by Abingdon, St Helen's, and Our Lady's, is held on a Friday evening in mid-March and features parents and alumni of all three schools, as well as local employers, representing a wide range of careers. Pupils can meet with representatives one to one, participate in small group discussions, and attend panel presentations. The event is compulsory for 5th Year pupils.

Several times a year, the Career Guidance Programme brings external speakers (often parents and alumni) to Abingdon School to host informal '**Industry Sector Insight Talks**', usually on a Thursday during P5/P6. These talks are designed to give 5th year and 6th form pupils insights into what different industry sectors are like; highlight key personal qualities needed for success; explain the rewards and sacrifices of the job; describe different specialisms within the industry; and reveal the different educational routes into the industry. These talks are especially useful to pupils unsure of what career they might pursue. In every three-year cycle, nine different industry sectors are covered.

Finally, 5th Year pupils continue to receive skills training, this Year during Michaelmas term and covering **Project Planning** skills, which will be critical during their A-Level Years and beyond.

### 5th Year Career Guidance Provision



## L6 (12, age 16-17, Upper School): c190 pupils

L6 is another busy Year for Abingdon's Career Guidance Programme, which helps pupils begin to think about what comes after leaving Abingdon, while also giving them further opportunities to gain work experience and to clarify their understanding of and gain deeper insights into potential future careers.

Throughout the Year, pupils can continue to use the career resources that are available to them in the main school library and on the pupil intranet (Firefly) and the Head of Career Guidance is available for **1:1 Meetings** with pupils to discuss their career interests and routes into those careers, and thus post-18 options, including higher education, alternatives to higher education, and GAP Years.

The Old Abingdonian Club, Abingdon School's alumni association, runs a second **Work Experience Scheme**, this one for L6 pupils. Alumni are recruited to host high quality, one to two-week work experience placements over the summer holidays to which L6 pupils can apply.

In addition, the Old Abingdonian Club hosts a **Sixth Form Careers Evening** on a Friday in November during which former pupils (at early or middle stages in their career) return to Abingdon to share with pupils what they have learned since leaving Abingdon, including insights into their current job and choices they made along their career journey to date. The event gives pupils information for career planning and helps them make choices about what options to pursue after leaving Abingdon.

For pupils considering taking a year off before entering university, Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine jointly run a **GAP Year Advice Evening** mid-week in January. The event includes a presentation on all the considerations involved in electing, planning, and managing a Gap Year and is followed by a panel discussion with alumni/ae from both schools.

L6 pupils receive training in **Interviewing** skills during Summer Term and can subsequently book a 1:1 meeting with the Head of Career Guidance to get further help and practice with their interviewing technique. Interviewing skills will be immediately useful in terms of applying for leadership roles within the school as well as for university or apprenticeship places, work experience, internships, scholarships, gap year programme placements, Year in Industry placements, and eventually part-time or full-time work.

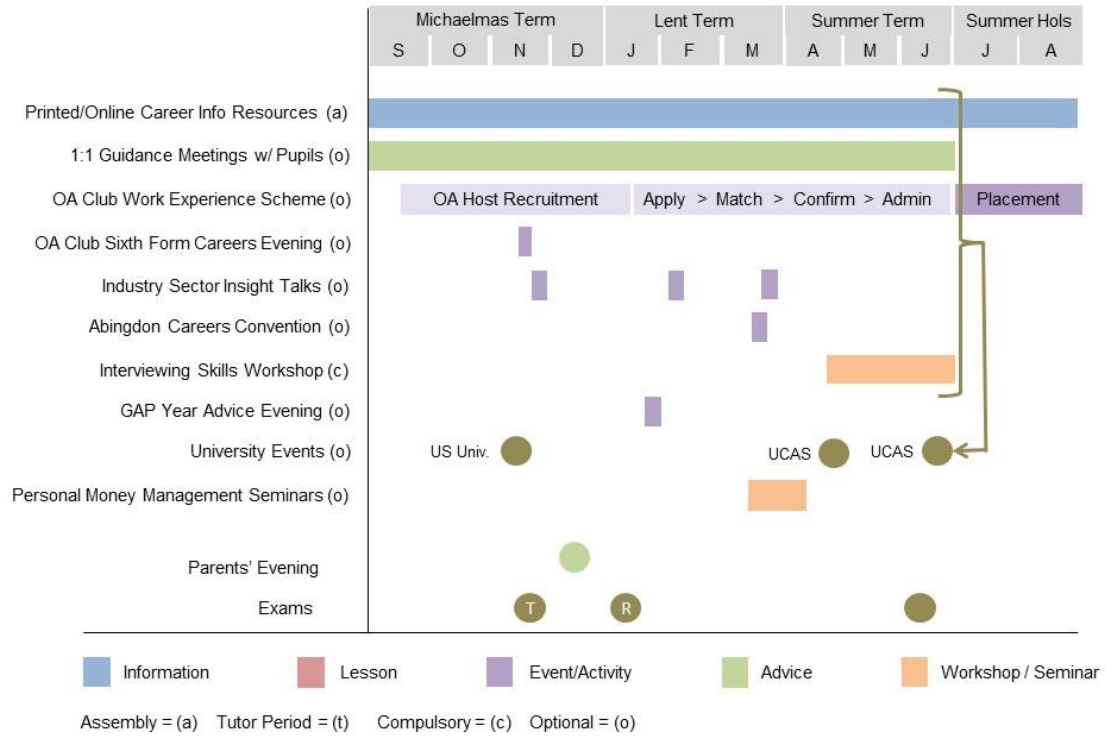
A **Sixth Form Personal Money Management Seminar Series** features five seminars, each on a different money management topic, including budgeting, banking, credit/debt, student loans, and taxation. Seminars are open to all L6 and U6 students on an optional, walk-in basis and will be held in the board room of the 6th Form Centre from 1.00 to 1.40pm on consecutive Tuesdays in March/April.

Many of the activities offered in 5th Year are also open to L6 pupils including:

- **Abingdon Careers Convention** in mid-March
- **Industry Sector Insight Talks**



### L6 Career Guidance Programme



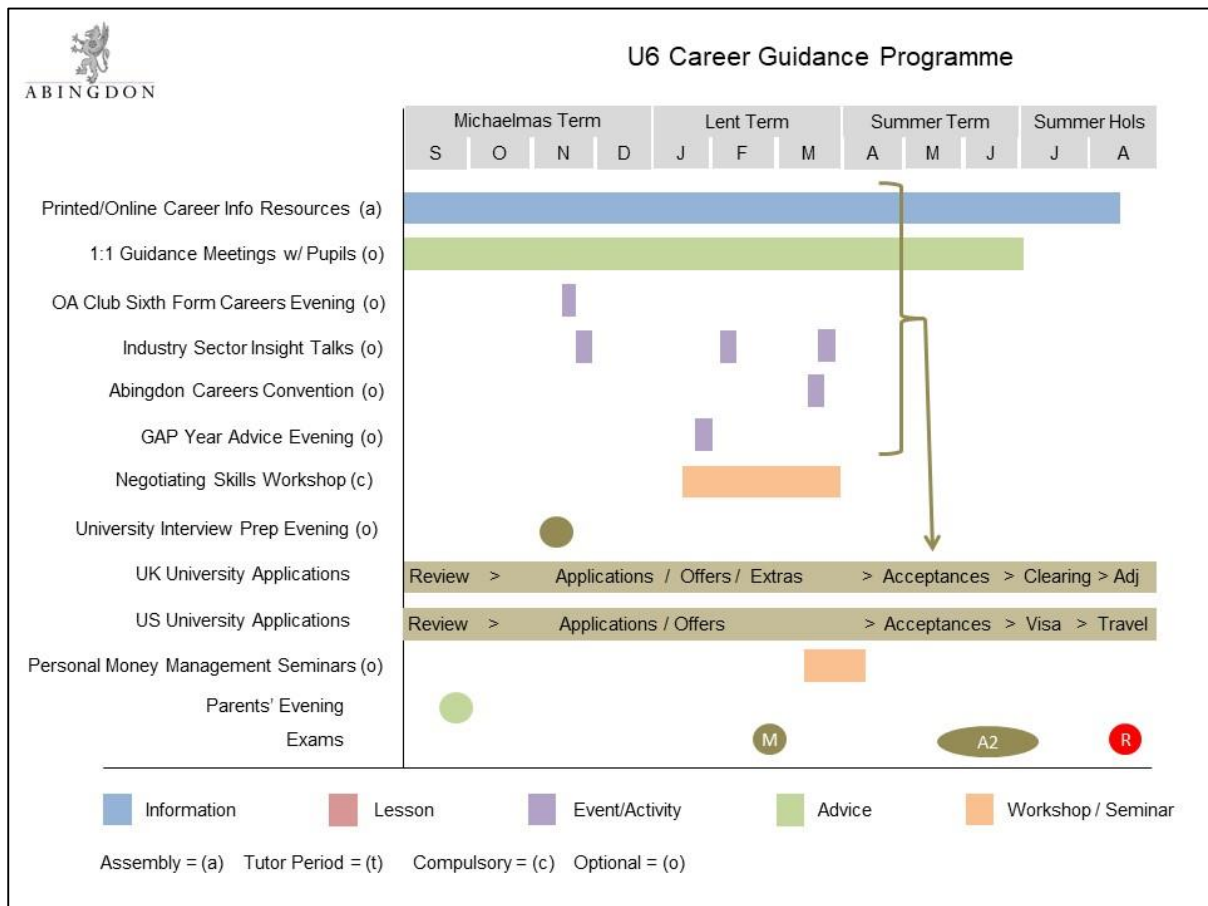


## U6 (13, age 17-18, Upper School): c160 pupils

All of the activities offered in L6 are also open to U6 pupils including:

- **Printed and online career research resources**
- **1:1 Guidance Meetings** (Careers, HE, Alternatives to HE, GAP Year)
- **OA Club Sixth Form Careers Evening** in November
- **GAP Year Advice Evening** in January
- **Abingdon Careers Convention** in mid-March
- **Personal Money Management Seminar Series** in March/April
- **Industry Sector Insight Talks**

The last and final soft skills training is for U6 pupils on **Negotiation** skills and is run during Lent Term.



## Other Careers Provision

The Head of Career Guidance:

- maintains a section of the main school library and pupil intranet (Firefly) for career information resources. Both facilities are available to all pupils and are continuously being expanded and enhanced, including publications, sign posting to the latest and best web sites, and creating bespoke resources for Abingdon pupils.
- maintains information on each pupil's 5th Year career profiling programme findings as well as guidance given and conclusions reached, accessible to teachers/tutors who are advising them on GCSE, A-Level, and HE courses.
- helps teachers link learning in lessons to knowledge/skills needed for certain careers ('curricular career connections'); recommends to teachers working professionals to speak to pupils about how what they learn transfers to future careers; keeps teachers up-to-date on the latest developments in alternatives to university and GAP Year options; and suggests and helps to coordinate career-related trips led by teachers for pupils.
- attends all parent evenings for 4<sup>th</sup> Year to U6 (and is also available for consultation at other times).
- signposts pupils of the appropriate age to opportunities within and outside School to gain experiences and qualifications and develop skills that help make them more attractive to employers in the future.
- coordinates termly visits by British Armed Forces Career Advisers (Army, Navy/Marines and RAF) to meet with 4th Year to U6 pupils interested in a career in the military.
- upon request, helps to put pupils in touch with relevant leavers (Old Abingdonians) to ask questions about specific careers and educational routes into careers.

## Parental Support for Career Thinking

Research suggests that the biggest influence on a pupil's career thinking comes from his/her parents. Parents can support their son's career thinking in several ways:

- Engage your son in informal conversation (at the right time and place!) about what he enjoys doing, what he is (or could become) good at, and what gives him personal satisfaction and reward. Ask him questions that facilitate self-exploration of his thoughts and self-confidence in his ideas.
- Remind him that there are many different occupations from which to choose (including many on the 'road less travelled by') and excellent school resources available to research them. Suggest he keep as broad a view as possible of

career options and not narrow prematurely.

- Encourage and enable him to pursue his ambitions, even if you don't share his enthusiasm.
- Take him to your workplace, talk to him about what you do now and what your career path has looked like, and identify the knowledge and skills you have used along the way so he gets a sense of what the world of work is like, understands how careers evolve, and realises that he will need to prepare for a career, whatever he does.
- Present career decisions you made as entirely bespoke to you and your situation at the time, being careful not to fall into the trap of justifying one's own career decisions or recruiting for one's own profession.
- Urge him to attend career events, fairs and talks at school and to undertake work experience regardless of whether or not the placement is in an area of career interest. If necessary, use your contacts to help him (but let him struggle to find his own placement before you intervene!)
- Support his participation in a range of extra-curricular activities, in and out of school, through which he can build a whole host of capabilities valuable in a career and life.
- Suggest he makes an appointment with the Head of Career Guidance to discuss education and career planning.
- And, finally, make sure that any advice you offer is current and not based on the way things were when you were at school, university or starting a career!