

# Abingdon School Curriculum 2016

The new A Level System  
(phase 2)

# Gove's changes

- \* All qualifications being reformed in phases.
- \* AS being decoupled from A Level – it no longer contributes to overall A Level.
- \* Linear assessment – i.e. exams at the end of the course. No modularity.
- \* Subjects being reformed over a period of 3 years, so there will be a mix of old and new for a while.

# Phased Change

- \* **2015:** Art, English, Economics, Business Studies, History, Psychology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- \* **2016:** Geography, Theatre Studies, DT, French, German, Spanish, Music, Latin, Greek, RS
- \* **2017:** Ancient History, Politics, Maths, Philosophy

# Linear Opportunities

- \* Release from shackles of AS exam at end of L6th which has meant focusing on exam requirements from an early stage and loss of teaching time.

## **More creative curriculum planning**

- \* Bringing harder/more interesting work into L6.
- \* Freedom to cover off-syllabus topics.
- \* More teaching time (no study leave in L6, summer term is teaching and learning, not exam technique).
- \* Ability for boys to change subjects later on in year.

# Curriculum Plan

- \* L6th: boys choose 4 subjects.
- \* Pursue courses until at least the summer of L6th.
- \* Decide whether to drop a subject for U6th.
- \* Take 3 or 4 subjects through to A Level in U6th.

# Curriculum Plan

- \* If boys drop a subject, it won't result in a qualification.
- \* Abingdon does not confuse education with exams.
- \* Universities want 3 A Levels.
- \* They will still have had the breadth of study without having to worry about exam criteria.
- \* Course will still have been rigorous – any one of them might be taken to A Level.

# Overarching Check Points

- \* November Tests in L6th.
- \* Rigorous Summer Exam after half term in L6th (akin to current AS) – a serious assessment of where they stand. Predicted grades.
- \* Mock Exams in Easter of U6th

# A Level alternative: pre-U

- \* Pre-U (Cambridge International), established since 2008.
- \* Comparable with A Level though it has a different grading system (D,M,P – each with 3 levels)
- \* Now a proven reliable route and universities understand it.
- \* Other schools doing pre-U: Eton, Charterhouse, Winchester, Oundle, Marlborough



# A Level alternative: pre-U

- \* We choose the best courses for our boys – thinking about challenge, interest, university preparation.
- \* From September 2015, **MFL** have been pursuing pre-U.
  - \* Have looked at new AL proposals; this fits our criteria better.
  - \* Criteria-referenced assessment.
  - \* Good links with other schools who have been doing it – shared experiences.
- \* Other subjects are looking/have considered it though at the moment A Levels are most suitable.

# University Position

- \* They want 3 A Levels (or equivalent). They are confident they will be able to identify best candidates without AS:
  - \* GCSE
  - \* Predictions
  - \* Personal Statement
  - \* Academic Reference – achievement & potential
  - \* Entrance Exams (Oxford, Medicine, Cambridge about to rejoin?)
- \* They will know school context; we will be explicit in refs.
- \* If you sit an AS, you must declare it on UCAS form, whatever its quality (even if it was your '4<sup>th</sup>' subject).

# University Position

- \* They like breadth of study (e.g. a 4<sup>th</sup> subject) even if it hasn't been taken to A Level. We will comment on 4<sup>th</sup> subject in references.
- \* Some university departments have a positive preference for additional study, e.g. Psychology, Mech Engineering, Architecture. See entry requirements.
- \* They love the EPQ.

# Extended Project Qualification

- \* Well established now as a respected qualification.
- \* Independent research project – **they** choose what they want to study. Must not cross over with AL course content but might be inspired by it.
- \* We teach them some methodology – how to research, do citations, construct a bibliography...
- \* They have a 1-2-1 supervisor who coaches them but does not ‘teach’ them; supposed to be outside of supervisor’s subject area.

# Extended Project Qualification

- \* Opt for it in January of L6th
- \* Summer Term + holiday is main research & writing
- \* Presentation and marking in Autumn Term of U6th

# Extended Project Qualification

## **Pilot scheme with current U6th**

- \* Checked secure on ALs (via Nov Tests)
- \* Asked for volunteers: 8 boys will be submitting (twice that began the process – about right/norm)

**Current L6th: 50 showing initial interest**

# Other Sixth Form Strands

## **General Studies Core Skills in L6th**

- \* Critical Thinking and Theory of Knowledge
- \* Practical elements, such as writing letters of application, interview skills
- \* MFL

## **General Studies courses in U6th**

- \* Roundabout to cover some 'key' things (e.g. managing finances, research skills, health)

# Other Sixth Form Strands

## Extension Opportunities

- \* Olympiads, Challenge Competitions & Scholarships
- \* Performance opportunities
- \* Trips & Visits
- \* Clubs & Societies – lectures, seminars, magazines etc.
- \* Green Abingdon Project & our internal extended essay



# In conclusion

## Linearity Rules!

- \* More freedom to educate without such a swift need to pay attention to exam technique.
- \* Unanimous excitement amongst staff & governors at the opportunities on offer.