



From Curriculum Director: Oliver Lomax

16 November 2018

To: Fifth year pupils and their parents

TENTATIVE PREFERENCE FOR SIXTH FORM SUBJECTS

This letter outlines in brief, the process of choosing A Level subjects for next year. Details can be found in a document called “The Sixth Form” which is available in the curriculum downloads 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. We have recently changed our requirement to reflect the national changes to GCSE grading. From summer 2019, you will require an overall average of a 6 (with a B grade = 6 for any subject still using grades) and a minimum of a 7 to begin A Level courses in that subject (with an 8 in Maths required for those wishing to start with Further Maths A Level).

Pupils who do not reach this level and who wish to be considered for a sixth form place, will be interviewed by the head shortly after the GCSE results are published. You should plan your holiday arrangements accordingly. It remains our strong recommendation that you should see a GCSE 7 or A as a minimum for beginning an A Level course in that subject, but there is room for negotiation on this if you have a 6 or B and wish to continue with that subject.

2. How the A levels are structured

A Levels are linear courses meaning that external exams are taken at the end of the upper sixth. Abingdon does not offer the opportunity to take a complete AS level at the end the lower sixth.

3. Number and selection of A-level subjects

At Abingdon, we wish you to express your preference for *four subjects*, and a backup fifth preference. You should assume that you will be studying all four throughout the sixth form, for the whole two years. Many Abingdon pupils drop to only three subjects after Easter in the lower sixth, or at the start of the upper sixth, and sixth form tutors will advise if they think this is appropriate. Our aim is to create the sixth form curriculum which is most suitable for each individual.

4. The range of sixth form subjects

The available A Level subjects at Abingdon are Ancient History, Art & Design, Biology, Business, Computer Science, Chemistry, Design & Technology, Drama & Theatre Studies, Economics, English Literature, French, German, Geography, Government & Politics, Greek, History, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physics, Religious Studies and Spanish. Note that A Level Computer Science is being offered for the first time. Psychology is no longer being offered to lower sixth from 2019. Government & Politics is taught at St Helen and St Katharine. Drama & Theatre Studies is taught in conjunction with St Helen's. Some Economics sets also include girls from St Helen's but are taught by Abingdon teachers.

Any course may be withdrawn if, for example, insufficient numbers of pupils choose a particular subject.

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Note that we do not allow you to study both RS and Philosophy. It is possible to take Economics and Business together in the lower sixth. However, owing to the fact that there is a significant overlapping of topics that will be covered in these courses in the Upper Sixth, boys should not expect to carry on with both subjects after the Lower Sixth unless they are planning to continue with all four of their subjects. Additionally, it should be noted that some British universities do not regard Economics and Business as sufficiently distinct to count as two different A levels so will often refuse to consider candidates offering three A Levels including Economics and Business. Boys continuing with all four A Levels might expect to get university offers that will allow only one or the other of Economics and Business to count.

You may choose **either** Mathematics **or** Further Mathematics, but not both (Further Mathematics will include A Level Mathematics).

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.

6. Seeking guidance

Your task is to combine the information, opinions and guidance available to you from your parents, your tutor, your subject teachers and the Director of University Applications, email caroline.taylor@abingdon.org.uk. If in doubt, your tutor is a good person to talk to, and they will be able to advise you or put you in touch with relevant people. 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.

7. Timescale and deadlines

You are asked to complete the Fifth Year Tentative Preferences online form by **Monday 26 November**. **Each boy has been sent the link to this form via his school email account**. 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 the chance to take part in A level “taster” lessons to get a better idea about the subjects you are considering. There will then a parents’ evening, and then you will be asked for a final preferences in early February 2019.

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

Yours sincerely

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