



From Curriculum Director: Oliver Lomax

To all fifth year pupils and their parents

15 November 2019

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. You will require an overall average of a 6 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 Headmaster 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 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 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 Christmas or 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, Greek, History, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physics, Politics, Religious Studies and Spanish. 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.

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Any course may be withdrawn if, for example, insufficient numbers of pupils choose a particular subject.

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 consider all the information, opinions and guidance available to you. 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 your suitability for 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 25th 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 sixth form "taster" lessons to get a better idea about the subjects you are considering. There will then be a parents' evening on Tuesday 28 January, and then you will be asked for a final preferences in early February 2020.

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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