

Abingdon School

Towards the Sixth Form

advice on choosing subjects

November 2019

Overview

Graeme May, Deputy Head Academic

- * All subjects have been reformed as linear courses.
- * “AS” still exists but as a stand-alone subject. Abingdon is not using this qualification (very few schools are).
- * All public examinations are at the end of the Upper Sixth (universities more reliant on GCSE score, predictions, personal statements, specific tests and interviews)

Curriculum Plan

- * L6th: boys choose 4 subjects (Ma/FM =1 subject)
- * Pursue courses until at least the end of Michaelmas Term.
- * Summer Exams. Guidance Grades.
- * Decide whether to drop a subject for U6th if not already dropped (beginning of or soon into U6th)
- * Take 3 or 4 subjects through to A Level in U6th.

Curriculum Organisation

- * 48 possible periods per fortnight (ppf)
- * 4 subjects (@ 10 ppf; 12 if FM)
- * 2xMindsets; separate lecture programme
- * 6 – 10 study periods per fortnight (supervised at first)
- * Sport is separate – 2 hours core + Wed pm
- * Other things: EPQ, GCSE MFL, tutor group, chapel, assemblies...

Subjects (24)

red = AL subjects not taught at GCSE

Ancient History

Art (§)

Biology (§)

Chemistry (§)

Computer Science

DT

Drama (joint with SHSK)

Business or Economics (with SHSK girls) (#)

English Literature (§)

French (*§)

Geography (§)

German (*§)

Politics (at SHSK)

Greek (§)

History (§)

Latin (§)

Maths **or** Further Maths (§)

Music (§)

Philosophy or RS

Physics (§)

Spanish (*§)

(*) pre-U

(§) subject GCSE required

(#) Bus **and** Econ can both be chosen
but caution needed - see more detailed
note

More advice (from HoDs)

(sheet is on website in Academic/Curriculum Downloads)



ABINGDON

A Level/Pre-U Choices: What GCSE Subjects are Required, Recommended or Useful?

The table below provides general guidance on the link between GCSE and Sixth Form subjects. Subjects without a GCSE equivalent in Abingdon's curriculum are indicated with an asterisk (*).

A Level / Pre- U Subject	GCSE Subjects (see notes at end for definitions)			Note
	Required	Recommended	Useful	
Ancient History			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ancient History• English Lang/Lit• History	
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Art (<i>see note</i>)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design & Tech.	In very particular circumstances, students who have not taken GCSE Art may be permitted to take A Level Art. Speak with the Head of Art.
Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maths• Biology or DA Science			
Business (*)			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• English Lang/Lit• Maths• History• Geography	The ability to analyse and then produce fluent, sustained writing are key skills, coupled with a strong level of numeracy.
Chemistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maths• Chemistry or DA Science			
Computer Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maths		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer Science	Students who have not done GCSE CS should speak to the Head of Department. Some catch-up work in

New subjects

- * **Taster lessons especially important:** don't waste slots on the subjects you're absolutely sure you're doing - go to the ones that are vying against each other in your mind, including new ones.
- * **Talking:** to teachers, more than once, looking at syllabus, talking to 6th formers, bearing in mind Career Guidance advice ...

Guidance from website on new subjects:

“For subjects that do not have a GCSE equivalent in Abingdon's curriculum, we would look for strength in subjects with similar skills to judge if a boy is likely to prosper in it. For example, in Economics it is useful to have mathematical and essay writing skills. For Politics, aptitudes for History and English probably offer the best guides. Philosophy needs the kind of thinking and writing that one sees in Religious Studies and other humanities subjects but also benefits from the rigour of the mathematically gifted.”

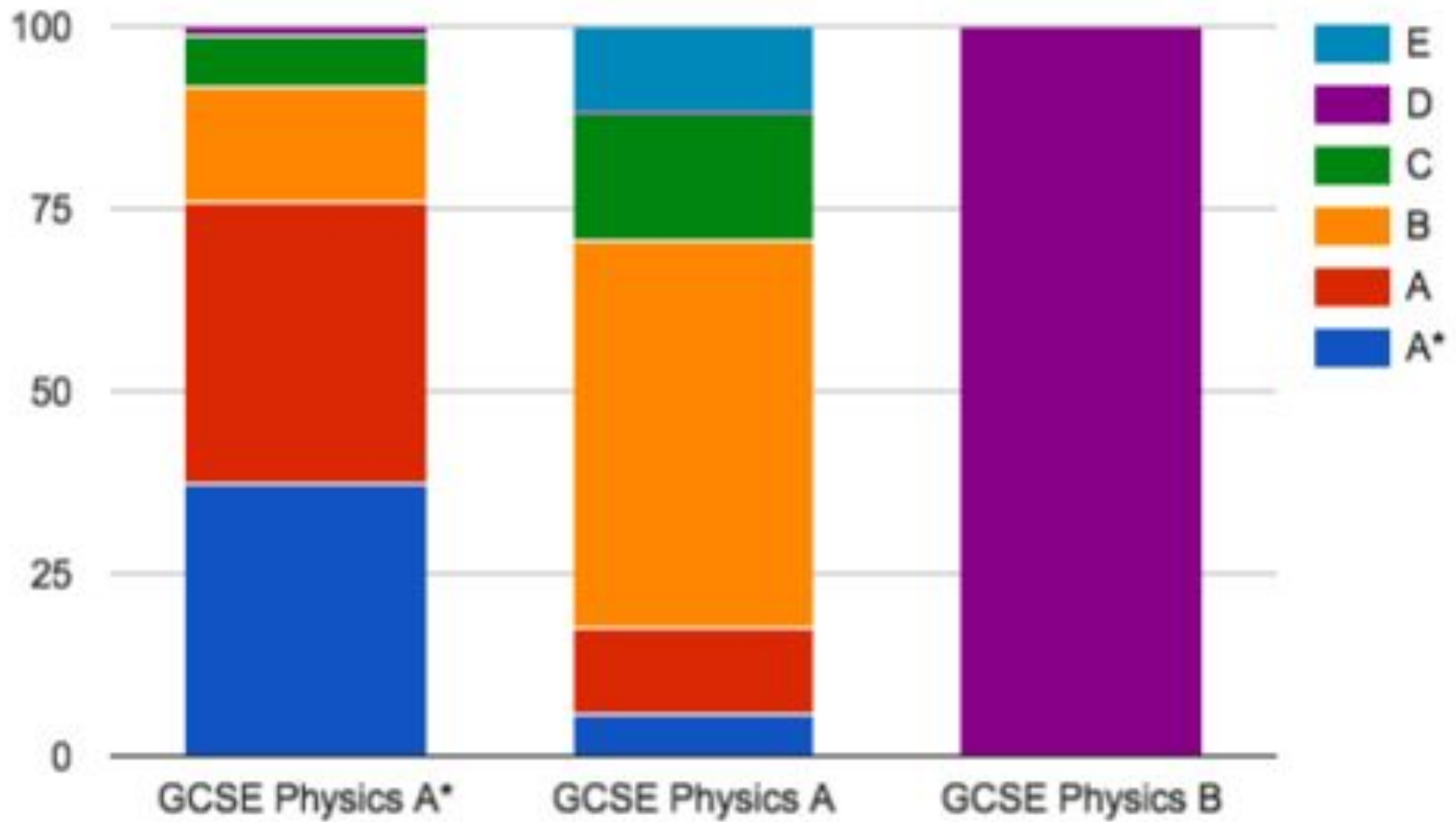
Other things to consider

- * **What do I really want to study for another year?**
 - * **NOT:** what do my parents want me to study?
 - * **NOT:** which teachers do I like?
 - * If it's a new subject, have I really done my research?

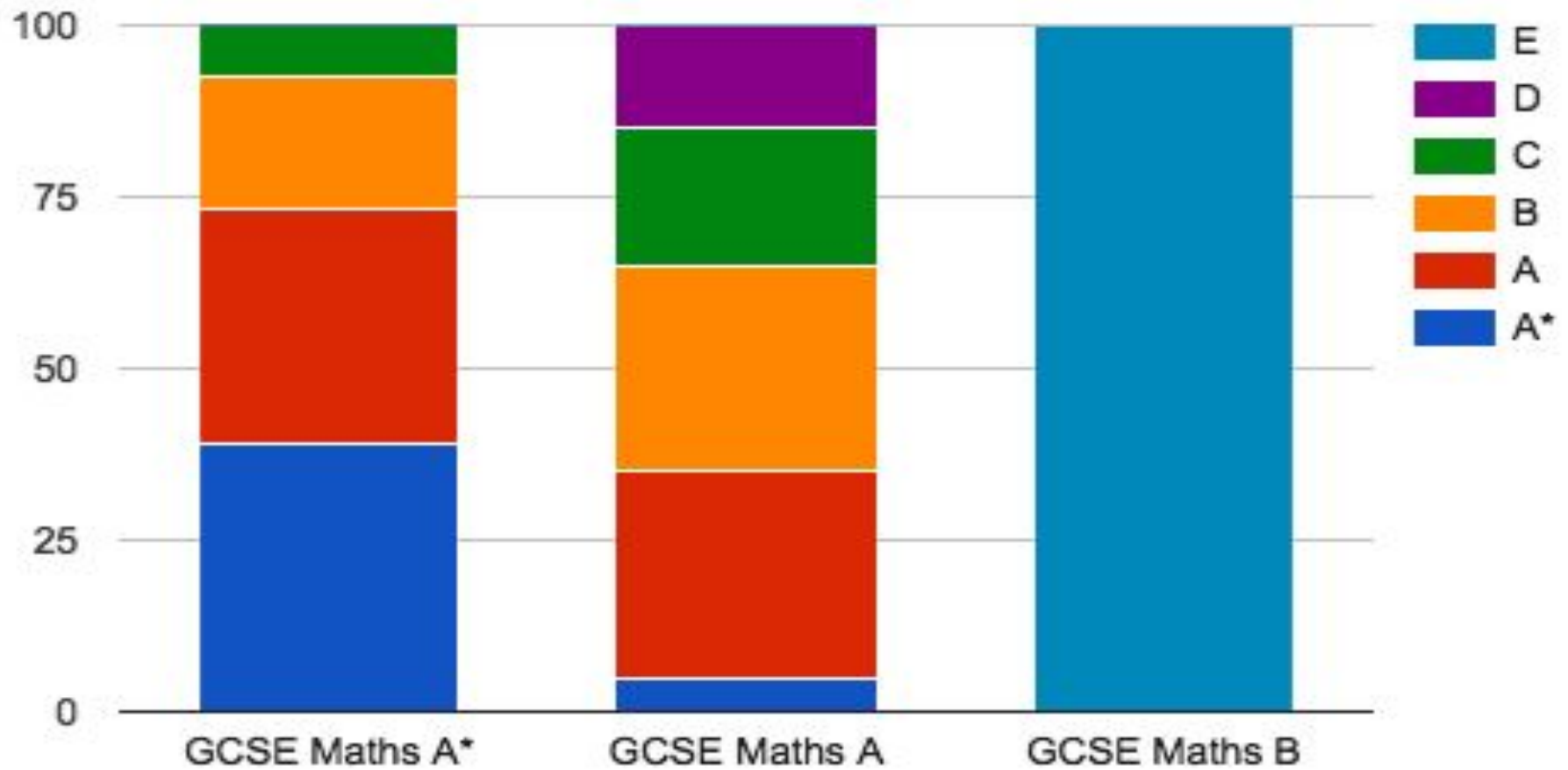
- * **What's the balance look like?**
 - * Lots of writing? Very little writing? A blend?
 - * A variety of skills or very similar skills?
 - * Employability skills: Creativity, Communication, Teamwork ...

- * **Am I any good at it?**
 - * Don't just judge from GCSE grade
 - * Sometimes we like subjects but they don't like us...

Physics AL chances from Physics GCSE



Physics AL chances from Maths GCSE



2019 weakest AL Results

(remembering overall A* was 30.2%, A*/A was 69.4% and A*/B was 90.2%)

- * 6xE grades

- * EEB

- * EEC

- * EBB

- * EDB

- * 5 x D grades

- * DBA

- * DCB

- * DCC

- * DUU

- * DCB

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 - * EEC (Maths, Physics, Business)
 - * EBB (Maths, English, Geography)
 - * EDB (Physics, Maths, Business)

- * 5 x D grades
 - * DBA
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- * 5 x D grades
 - * DBA (Philosophy, Economics, History)
 - * DCB (Chemistry, Physics, Maths)
 - * DCC (Maths, Physics, Chemistry)
 - * DUU (Latin, Maths, Chemistry) [now resitting in two completely new ALs]
 - * DCB (Maths, Physics, Business)

Should we be worried about our Maths & Science departments?

(A: No, they are actually really good at what they do)

- * Maths: 84 boys - 72 (86%) A*/B
- * F. Maths: 26 boys - 22 (85%) A*/B

- * Chemistry: 55 boys - 48 (87%) A*/B
- * Physics: 42 boys - 33 (79%) A*/B
- * Biology: 25 boys - 22 (88%) A*/B

Other popular subjects (2019)

- * Economics: 55 boys & girls - 47 (94%) A*/B
- * History: 50 boys - 50 (100%) A*/B
- * Geography: 37 boys - 34 (92%) A*/B
- * English Literature: 20 boys - 20 (100%) A*/B
- * Politics: 19 boys - 19 (100%) A*/B

Also: top A* rates (2019) - those above school average:

- * Art, Drama, Economics, English Literature, Politics, Latin, Maths

Conclusions?

- * Be careful not to be swept along with the tide into subjects that you're not suited for (even if you - or your parents - wish you were).
- * Experience tells us that maths and the sciences in particular punish relative weakness.
- * Success is available across the curriculum and we do not have 'soft' subjects - all of our subjects command the respect of Russell Group universities.

11 November	Into the Sixth Form Information evening.
25 November	Tentative Preferences submitted
early December	Tentative Preferences analysed by staff for anomalous decisions
w/c 7 January	Mock examinations
mid January	Self assessment & interview with tutor/housemaster after mocks
23 January	A Level Taster Lessons Day
28 January	Parents' evening
Early February	Reports to parents
3 February	'Final' Sixth Form choices submitted
7 September	Students obtaining less than grade 7 in an A Level/pre-U subject (8 in Ma for FM) to meet with relevant HoD for permission to start course

Subject sessions start at 6.40pm in Greening Court

