



20 November 2020

To all fifth year pupils and their parents

TENTATIVE PREFERENCE FOR SIXTH FORM SUBJECTS

This letter details the process for 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 (<https://www.abingdon.org.uk/academic/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 and wish to continue with that subject.

2. How the courses are structured

A Levels and Pre-Us 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 of the Lower Sixth. We do offer the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which is worth half an A Level in terms of UCAS points, but this is not something you need to consider now; it is introduced as an optional extra in the second term of the Lower Sixth.

3. Number and selection of A-level/pre-U subjects

At Abingdon, we wish you to express your preference for *four subjects*, and a backup fifth preference. You should assume that you will study all four subjects for at least one term and you will be able to study all four for the whole two years if that is your preference. We ask all of the Fifth Year students to submit preferences, even if you are thinking about being somewhere else for your Sixth Form years (there is a place to let us know this on the form).

Most Abingdon pupils drop to three subjects after Christmas or Easter in the Lower Sixth, or at the start of the Upper Sixth; there are set times when the dropping of a subject is allowed and sixth form tutors will advise if they think dropping is appropriate. Our aim is to create the Sixth Form curriculum which is most suitable for each individual. If, a few weeks into the Lower Sixth courses, you feel that you have chosen

the wrong subject and have a different preference, we can often make this happen but there is no guarantee that we can do it and there is inevitably catch-up work to be done in the new subject when we can achieve a swap. Changes such as this become less and less feasible the later we get into the first term.

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, Economics, English Literature, Geography, Greek, History, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physics, Politics and Religious Studies. French, German and Spanish are also available but follow the Cambridge Pre-U courses.

Politics is taught at St Helen's solely by St Helen's teachers. Drama & Theatre Studies is taught jointly with St Helen's. Some Economics sets also include girls from St Helen's but all sets are taught solely by Abingdon teachers. Although we do not offer Psychology A level at Abingdon, it may be possible for you to study this at St Helen's but, as it is not one of our standard joint subjects, the feasibility of it being achievable year to year is not known until much later in the year (second half of the summer term). There is a separate option on the form to express your interest in Psychology but plans for Sixth Form study at Abingdon should not rely on Psychology being available.

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

Please 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 and will lead to the award of two separate A Level grades).

At this stage we welcome preferences for any combination of subjects within the guidance above. When the timetable is constructed, however, there is sometimes a small number of pupils with subject combinations that are difficult to fit in. We will inform you and your parents as early as possible if this is the case.

6. Seeking guidance

Your task is to consider all the information, opinions and guidance available to you. Your tutor is a good person to talk to in the first place, 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 relevant Head of Department.

7. Timescale and deadlines

You are asked to complete the Fifth Year Tentative Preferences online form by **Wednesday 25 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, and then you will be asked for your final preferences in early February 2020. After that, we will begin writing the timetable and, though

changes to preferences may be possible after that, they will become more difficult to achieve the later on a change of mind is conveyed to us.

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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