



ABINGDON

THE SIXTH FORM

September 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to explain the sixth form curriculum at Abingdon School for those entering the sixth form in September 2021. It contains general advice as well as specific information for each subject. Further copies of this document may be downloaded from the curriculum area of the school website (<http://www.abingdon.org.uk/curriculum/>). There you will also find a useful document "A Level and Pre-U Subjects - What GCSEs are Required, Recommended or Useful".

Now is the time to consider the subjects that you wish to read in the sixth form and your career options. All members of the present fifth year are asked to indicate **tentative** preferences of A level subjects in November 2020. This is necessary to allow early planning of the timetable and staffing for the next academic year. Extra information can be gleaned from your GCSE mocks and the parents' evening and you are asked to provide **final** preferences in February 2021.

This booklet is being given to you now so that you may study it and seek advice in advance of GCSE examination pressures. Please read all the material carefully, and ensure that your parents also have an opportunity to read it. Subject specific web addresses are provided under the subject headings later in this document if you wish to investigate a syllabus in more detail. These are correct at the time of printing but may be changed by the exam boards concerned. Some fifth year pupils will have already decided on the combination of sixth form subjects that they wish to pursue. The majority, however, will need to spend a considerable time in thought and in discussion before coming to an informed conclusion.

2. QUALIFICATION FOR THE SIXTH FORM

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 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).

With a GCSE 7-9 percentage consistently in the 80s, it should be remembered that the vast majority of Abingdonians sail comfortably over the bar and we do not expect that to change. The required average of a 6 will present few, if any, with a problem especially as a less than '6' performance in one subject can be compensated for by a '7+' achievement in another.

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.

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 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.

3. NEW SIXTH FORM ENTRANTS

Applicants for the Abingdon School sixth form (http://www.abingdon.org.uk/sixth_form_admission/) from other schools will be asked at interview about the A level subjects they wish to study. They will be asked to complete a subject preference form, and may be offered a place to read four specific A level subjects, provided that they obtain the GCSE requirement stated above, or the equivalent for overseas candidates. Any subsequent changes in the choice of A level subjects may not be possible, and requests in this connection should be promptly discussed with the Curriculum Director. This is important because it affects set sizes, numbers of sets and timetabling. When the subjects are to be agreed after GCSE results, we cannot guarantee to be able to provide any desired subject combination; by that stage, many sets are full and the timetable is unalterable.

Bursaries (<http://www.abingdon.org.uk/bursaries/>), which provide financial assistance, are available to those boys whose parents could not otherwise afford the fees. In addition to bursary support towards school fees, further funds may be available for travel on school buses, trips and school uniform. Bursaries are awarded to boys on entry to Abingdon School. Bursaries vary in value and can be up to 100% of fees. Bursary support is based on an assessment of financial circumstances. For further information please contact the Admissions department (see below).

New sixth form entrants must, please, inform the Admissions department of their GCSE results as soon as they are known, in late August (telephone 01235 849041 or email: admissions@abingdon.org.uk).

4. SIXTH FORM SCHOLARSHIPS

Academic scholarships are available on entry to the sixth form from other schools. The academic scholarship examination is usually held in February or at other times by arrangement. Candidates will be assessed in four of the subjects they intend to study at A level, together with a general paper and a reasoning paper. There will also be one or more interviews. Special arrangements are made for overseas candidates. Boys already at Abingdon will be automatically considered for a sixth-form academic scholarship on the basis of their performance in middle school and at GCSE: there is no need to submit an application.

In addition Art, Design Technology, Drama, Music and Sports scholarships may be awarded on entry to the Sixth form. Boys already at Abingdon will be invited to apply for these awards if they are felt to have demonstrated appropriate levels of achievement and commitment in one or more of these areas during their time in middle school.

Music scholarship candidates are expected to be highly proficient in at least two instruments. Art and Design Technology scholarships may be awarded to pupils who will be studying Art and/or Design Technology at A level, and are awarded on the basis of project work, a practical examination and an interview. Sports scholarships may be awarded to a candidate who demonstrates outstanding dedication and commitment to reaching the highest level of performance. Drama scholarships may be awarded to outstanding candidates who demonstrate significant ability as stage performers combined with a strong commitment to working as part of a creative team. The award of Music, Art, Design Technology, Drama and Sport scholarships all take place in the Lent term. More information regarding these scholarships is available from the School website (http://www.abingdon.org.uk/sixth_form_scholarships/) as well as the Admissions department.

All Scholarships entitle the holder to a nominal fee remission of £300 per annum. However, as is the case for all pupils, there is an option to apply for further financial assistance through a means-tested bursary which can be worth up to 100% of fees.

Arkwright scholarships could be available for pupils who are considering a career in the field of Product Design or Engineering. These scholarships, offered by the Combined Trusts Scholarship Trust in conjunction with certain schools, are intended to enable the study of Design and Technology at sixth form level. Awards are made to the value of £500 and are intended to support the scholar in pursuing his interest in design. Applications must be submitted by January in the academic year in which the candidate applies for a sixth form place at Abingdon. The scholarship comprises a written design paper followed by an external interview if short-listed. Further details of this external scholarship can be found at www.arkwright.org.uk or from the head of Design Technology, Dan Hughes (dan.hughes@abingdon.org.uk).

If parents wish to be considered for a means-tested award they are asked to complete a confidential form, but they are under no obligation to do so. The value of any financial award is reassessed annually. All cases are judged on their own merits and parents are invited to discuss their eligibility for a financial award with the Financial Controller.

For more information contact the Admissions department by telephone 01235 849041 or via email admissions@abingdon.org.uk

5. ABINGDON SCHOOL POLICY ON 16 - 18 CURRICULUM

In the lower sixth all pupils begin by studying four subjects. All these subjects should be chosen initially in the expectation that the pupil will pursue that subject to A level. A Levels are linear, two year courses. We do not offer the standalone AS qualification in any subject.

We ensure that each pupil is closely monitored by his tutor and housemaster as he passes through the sixth form, so that his choice of subjects and performance is constantly assessed in relation to his ability and his future. Pupils are given the opportunity to drop down to three subjects at the end of each term of the lower sixth (i.e. they may not drop *during* the term). At these times, discussions are held as needed between the pupil, his tutor, housemaster and the Curriculum Director about what programme each pupil should follow.

6. THE SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM IN OUTLINE

Pupils will study four main A level or pre-U subjects, one in each of the blocks in the timetable. This typically occupies forty lessons a fortnight. Additionally, boys will have a “tutor period” once per week which covers a “Mindsets” programme in the lower sixth and “Enrichment” courses in the upper sixth. There is also a programme of lectures featuring a variety of in-house and visiting speakers. There are often other optional courses such as Language GCSEs, Creative Writing AS Level, some Further Mathematics and extension classes if appropriate. Pupils also have supervised private study periods and take part in at least two sport sessions each week.

7. SUBJECT PREFERENCES

Sixth formers study four subjects. Your task is to work out what the best sixth form study programme for you is likely to be, based on all the information available to you (e.g. this booklet, your tutor, your subject teachers, Mrs Taylor (Assistant Upper Master, Universities), Mr Triff (Head

of Career Guidance), your parents, taster lessons in the Lent term ... and so on). b If you have any queries about the suitability of a particular subject course, consult your teacher in that subject or the Head of Department concerned. In all other matters your tutor and your housemaster are your main source of advice. You should keep your tutor informed of your latest thinking.

After pupils have expressed their “final” preferences in February, a blocking system will be constructed to suit as many pupils as possible. Most subject combinations are possible, but we do not allow pupils to study both Religious Studies and Philosophy. Also, pupils may choose **either** Mathematics **or** Further Mathematics, but not both. If your particular combination of subjects is not possible under the blocking system, Mr Lomax will contact you directly to discuss how the problem may be resolved.

Boys may choose Economics as well as Business as two of their four subjects in Lower Sixth but, 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.

We must reserve the right not to run a subject if very few pupils opt for it. Not all combinations of subjects will be possible, so pupils are asked to rank their preferred selection of subjects in order of importance to them.

If, at any stage up to September 2021, you wish to alter your A level subjects, you must immediately inform the Curriculum Director, Mr Lomax, in case the latest version of the blocking system will not permit your revised combination of subjects. Alteration is only possible with the permission of the Curriculum Director.

Some suitable combinations of A level subjects are described in the notes on individual subjects in the rest of this booklet. Do not choose your preferences on the basis of your empathy with particular teachers - it is your interest in, and enthusiasm for, a subject that matters, provided that it satisfies your university/career aspirations. Do not be worried if at this stage you have little idea of which subjects you wish to study in the sixth form. You may wish to consider whether you fall into any of the following categories of student. If you do, it is worth taking note of the advice given.

The scientist: If you are considering a degree in a science subject then it is worth considering whether Maths or Further Maths could be helpful, and whether *not* studying one of the other sciences might limit your options.

The essayist: If you are thinking of choosing mostly essay subjects then you will have a wide range of degrees and careers available to you. However, it would not be recommended as preparation for a maths or science degree. For example, it would be difficult to apply for a Chemistry degree with A levels in Chemistry, English, History and French.

The linguist: If you are considering continuing with a language to university, you may find it helpful to study two languages at A level to prove your linguistic abilities.

The artist: Music A level is essential for Music degrees and Art A level is almost essential for Art foundation and degree courses, as it is your opportunity to develop your portfolio. Drama courses vary in their approach to Drama and Theatre A level, although in most cases it is an

expectation. If the Drama course is more academic than performance-based then Drama and Theatre is likely to be required, and possibly English Literature. Design and Technology A level can be another useful subject to demonstrate creativity.

In general, entry to the professions, business and industry rarely require any particular A level subject combinations. There are, however, a few notable exceptions to this rule:

- Medicine – Chemistry is essential; Biology is a distinct advantage and essential for the more competitive courses
- Engineering – Maths and Physics are essential
- Architecture – Art (almost) essential. Maths and/or Physics would be a significant advantage
- Finance – Maths A level is advantageous and, for many of the top economics degree courses at the more competitive universities, A Level maths is a requirement. Economics or Business would be interesting for the student, but not a requirement.

Competence in a modern foreign language is an advantage in almost every career area.

In evaluating how A-level choices affect career choices it is better to consider the skills or competencies acquired through each subject:

Evaluative Skills

These skills involve the ability to communicate and compare different arguments, and to convincingly argue your own case. Evaluative skills are particularly useful for careers in Law, Politics, Marketing, Publishing, and Social Work. They are especially taught in essay subjects.

Creativity

Creativity is naturally especially valued in careers such as Art and Design, Architecture, Publishing, Performing Arts and Advertising but it is more and more being seen by a much more wide-ranging group of employers as one of their most looked-for qualities in candidates. Being able to think creatively is more openly taught in Art, Design & Technology, English, Drama & Theatre and Music.

Mechanical Skills

Being able to see what shapes fit where, and making and working with mechanical objects may be classified as mechanical skills. These are useful in Architecture, Art and Design, and Engineering, and are explicitly taught in Art, Physics, Design and Technology, and Maths.

Financial Awareness

The ability to understand business, finance, and money in large organisations/countries is highly valuable in many careers. Its use is more pronounced in Business, Engineering, Finance, Manufacturing, Marketing, Retail, etc. This awareness is more explicitly taught in Economics or Business.

Consideration of these skills is of use in choosing A-level subject combinations. It should be emphasised that while many occupations do not directly use the subject knowledge obtained at A-level (or even degree level), the skills that are obtained in studying them are used all the time.

Guidance for post-18 education and training

In addition to the support available from tutors, housemasters and subject teachers, Sixth Formers at Abingdon can seek expert, impartial advice from two offices dedicated to providing

guidance, information and practical assistance in pursuing all post-18 options, including applying to universities in the UK and overseas.

The UCAS Office (Mrs Taylor and Mrs Gibbard) not only processes all UCAS (UK) applications, it provides guidance on writing personal statements and also works with boys to help them explore the range of options available to them, encouraging them to broaden their research and their horizons before selecting their final course and university choices. Every sixth former is invited to sign up to <https://www.unifrog.org/>, an online resource designed specifically to help students make post-18 choices. There are a range of other online resources available, of which we recommend the following:

www.ucas.com

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/the-smart-way-to-choosing-your-first-and-insurance-choices>

<https://russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree>

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>

The UCAS Office also runs a series of events throughout the academic year, including a universities fair and university application preparation workshops to support boys as they determine their degree and UK university choices.

Mr Triff, whose primary role is career guidance, also supports students who are considering applying to universities overseas (including the USA, Canada, Europe, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand) as well as advising students on alternatives to university (including higher national qualifications, school leaver programmes and apprenticeships) and on taking a Gap Year. A wide range of resources is available on the pupil intranet, Firefly.

8. ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

Sixth form students take part in the enrichment program which has 3 strands. Firstly, 6th form PSHCE is delivered via tutors, in both the L6th and U6th and covers topics such as:

Wellbeing for university and beyond, time management, revision strategies, growth mindsets, anxiety, stress and sleep hygiene, love and relationships, everyday sexism, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+ amongst others.

In addition, these topics are underpinned by our 6th form lecture program, this is the second strand. The following topics are being covered in 2020-2021 by subject experts: teenagers and the law, teenage wellbeing and resilience, healthy relationships, pleasure traps and addictive behaviours, preparing for university as well as drawing upon popular speakers with compelling life stories.

In the U6th form students also complete a roundabout of nine topics which includes topics such as: pleasure traps, existential intelligence, staying mentally healthy beyond school, the body language workshop, meeting and persuading, food talk, shaping your leadership style and critical thinking beyond the classroom. This completes the third strand.

Our aim is that by the time Abingdonians leave school they have examined a broad range of topics, are equipped for life beyond school and have the capacity to think through problems

whilst confident in the knowledge of who they are and the direction in which they want to go. In addition, the concept of wellbeing runs throughout the PDE program as we want to encourage boys to have a good understanding of what positive wellbeing is and how they can look after their own mental fitness throughout life.

In addition, Upper Sixth formers receive their own programme of lectures and talks at various points throughout the year.

9. CAREER GUIDANCE

Abingdon's Career Guidance Programme for the Sixth Form helps pupils begin to think about what comes after leaving Abingdon, including consideration of higher education, while also giving them further opportunities to gain work experience and to clarify their understanding of and gain deeper insights into potential future careers.

Throughout the Year, pupils can continue to use the career resources that are available to them on the pupil intranet (Firefly) and the Head of Career Guidance is available for 1:1 Meetings with pupils to discuss their career interests and routes into those careers, and thus post-18 options, including higher education, alternatives to higher education, and GAP Years.

The Old Abingdonian Club, Abingdon School's alumni association, runs a Work Experience Scheme for L6 pupils. Alumni are recruited to host high quality, one to two-week work experience placements over the summer holidays to which L6 pupils can apply.

In addition, the Old Abingdonian Club hosts a Sixth Form Careers Evening on a Friday in November during which former pupils (at early or middle stages in their career) return to Abingdon to share with pupils what they have learned since leaving Abingdon, including insights into their current job and choices they made along their career journey to date. The event gives pupils information for career planning and helps them make choices about what options to pursue after leaving Abingdon.

For pupils considering taking a year off before entering university, Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine jointly run a GAP Year Advice Evening mid-week in January. The event includes a presentation on all the considerations involved in electing, planning, and managing a Gap Year and is followed by a panel discussion with alumni/ae from both schools.

L6 pupils receive training in Interviewing skills during Summer Term and can subsequently book a 1:1 meeting with the Head of Career Guidance to get further help and practice with their interviewing technique. Interviewing skills will be immediately useful in terms of applying for leadership roles within the school as well as for university or apprenticeship places, work experience, internships, scholarships, gap year programme placements, Year in Industry placements, and eventually part-time or full-time work. The last and final soft skills training is for U6 pupils on Negotiation skills and is run during Lent Term.

The Sixth Form 'Money Matters' Seminar Series features five financial education seminars, each on a different money management topic, including budgeting, banking, debt & insurance, student loans, and taxation. Seminars are open to all L6 and U6 students on an optional, walk-in basis on consecutive Tuesday afternoons in March/April, either side of term break.

Many of the activities offered in 5th Year are also open to L6 pupils including:

- Abingdon Careers Convention in mid-March
- Career Insight Talks in Lent Term

Further information can be found on the career guidance section of the school website at <https://www.abingdon.org.uk/careers> or by contacting Michael Triff (michael.triff@abingdon.org.uk)

10. LEARNING SUPPORT

The Learning Support department continues to support students through their transition into the sixth form and is available, on request, throughout their A level courses. Such support takes the form of 1:1 lessons and looks at skills such as time management, note-making, reading higher level texts and tackling assignments. Learning support teachers can also assist with subject-specific skills such as essay planning although curriculum-specific support is best accessed through the subject specialists. Requests for learning support can come from the student themselves, their tutor/ housemaster or their teachers. Looking forward, we can also help with screening for and implementing exam arrangements, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of such arrangements. And, even further ahead, we can advise on university applications and planning for the transition to university.

11. CHANGE OF SUBJECTS WHEN IN THE SIXTH FORM

Once in the sixth form any possible changes of sixth form subjects or sets must be discussed with your parents, subject teachers, tutor, housemaster and the Curriculum Director.

Oliver Lomax - Curriculum Director (oliver.lomax@abingdon.org.uk)
November 2020

12. SUBJECTS

ANCIENT HISTORY

OCR Classics: Ancient History (H407)

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-ancient-history-h007-h407-from-2017/>

'To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?' The ancient orator Cicero's words were quoted by a government minister, the aptly named Lord Adonis, in a parliamentary debate when he was arguing for the continuing relevance of this A-level to modern education. In the same debate Baroness Warnock described ancient history as 'an extraordinarily useful subject... which teaches pupils in a manageable way what it is to seek and use evidence, both literary and archaeological. It is an ideal A-level subject.'

The new OCR ancient history syllabus lives up to this billing. It offers the opportunity to study the civilisations of Greece and Rome, two of the most influential cultures in world history. Our study of Greece includes the Persian Wars, the creation of the world's first democracy in Athens, and its ruin during the first 'world' war between the various Greek states; and that of Rome the tumultuous years which saw the collapse of the Republic, the establishment by Augustus of a military dictatorship and its evolution under the other Julio-Claudian emperors, such as Caligula and Nero. No knowledge of Greek or Latin is required, since all sources are studied in translation, and to have studied Ancient History GCSE is not a requirement.

Ancient History is traditionally considered to be an ideal complement to the study of English, History, Latin, Greek, or Politics, though the broad nature of the syllabus and the skills involved make it relevant whatever one's discipline. The ability to select relevant information from a mass of raw data is crucial; candidates will also be expected to argue a case in essays, make artistic judgments upon literature and architecture, and draw parallels with later history and politics. A willingness to read outside class is essential if a pupil wishes to profit fully from the course.

The focus is ancient sources, not only literary and historical texts, but also archaeological, inscriptional and architectural evidence. The ancient history section of the school library is very strong, and the department holds a wide selection of visual material of relevance to the topics being studied. In addition the department runs annual Classics trips abroad as well as trips to the British Museum and to Greek drama productions. There are also conferences and lectures to broaden perspectives still further.

In the first year we study fifth-century Greece and the establishment of the principate at Rome by Augustus and subsequent emperors: the former includes a detailed study of the wars (and diplomacy) between Greeks and Persians, and the increasingly fraught relations between the different Greek states, culminating in the thirty years of the Peloponnesian War. The latter encompasses the emperors' transformation of the government and appearance of the city of Rome and its place as the centre of the Empire. We will explore the way in which the Roman world was completely altered in this period, the impact of which is still felt across Europe to this day.

In the second year we turn to more detailed studies. First, we focus on Athens in greater detail, both studying the workings of the democracy and the development of Athenian culture during the fifth century BC, one of the richest ages of human creativity of any period, witnessing the birth of drama, history and philosophy to name but three areas. Secondly in Rome we study the late Republic, focusing on the causes for its collapse: the violence, corruption and competition

between the various military leaders. The story of Sulla, Pompey, Caesar and Octavian tearing Rome apart is one of the great narratives of world history.

The Greek and Roman halves of the course carry an equal weighting of 50%.

Hugh Price - hugh.price@abingdon.org.uk

ART

Edexcel/Pearson GCE in Fine Art (9AD0)

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/art-and-design-2015.html>

The study of Fine Art at A Level will develop intellectual, imaginative, creative and intuitive capabilities. The course will follow the new Pearson Edexcel A Level specification, which has been designed to allow students more time and flexibility to develop and explore their own personal investigations from a theme negotiated with their teacher.

The aims and objectives of the Pearson Edexcel course are to enable students to develop:

- intellectual, imaginative, creative and intuitive capabilities
- investigative, analytical, experimental, practical, technical and expressive skills,
- aesthetic understanding and critical judgement
- independence of mind in developing, refining and communicating their own ideas, their own intentions and their own personal outcomes
- an interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of art, craft and design
- their experience of working with a broad range of media
- an understanding of the interrelationships between art, craft and design
- processes and an awareness of the contexts in which they operate
- knowledge and experience of real-world contexts and, where appropriate, links
- to the creative industries
- knowledge and understanding of art, craft, design and media and technologies
- in contemporary and past societies and cultures
- an awareness of different roles, functions, audiences and consumers of art, craft

The course is split into two components: a Personal Investigation (Portfolio) (60%) and an Externally Set Assignment (40%).

Personal Investigation

This component allows students opportunities to generate and develop ideas, research primary and contextual sources, record practical and written observations, experiment with media and processes, and refine ideas towards producing personal resolved outcomes. Alongside this they will write a 3,000 word Personal Study, which directly relates to their practical work but is marked separately and comprises 12% of the final qualification.

External Set Assignment

This component incorporates two major elements: preparatory studies and a 15 hour exam. The exam paper will be available on the 1 February 2018 with the 15 hour practical exam being sat in the Summer Term of that year.

In Lower Sixth, pupils will take part in a series of teacher led workshops, exploring paint, print, drawing, digital and three dimensional materials on a shared theme. They will choose which direction to take this in the Lent term and develop this independently into your coursework

portfolio. In the Upper Sixth, pupils have an individual studio space, which they have access to outside of lessons and this becomes a valuable personal working space. To help strengthen contextual links there are regular trips to art galleries and museums both locally and further afield, as well as annual residential trips abroad.

A Level artists at Abingdon have gone on to study courses in fine art, graphic design, three-dimensional design, fashion, architecture and landscape architecture to name just a few. For those thinking of studying Architecture, Art A level is essential as a portfolio of visual work is normally required. Success in art also requires organisation, determination, risk taking, dedication: transferable skills you can take into any career.

Mr Paul Williamson - paul.williamson@abingdon.org.uk

BIOLOGY

AQA GCE in Biology (course code 7402).

www.aqa.org.uk/7402

During the lower sixth pupils study four theory units taught between two teachers. One member of staff will teach “Biological molecules” followed by “Organisms exchange substances with their environment” and the other member of staff will teach “Cells” followed by “Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms”. As well as learning the factual material in the specification, pupils will need to develop their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures. They will also need to develop their ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence.

During the upper sixth pupils again study four theory units split between two members of staff. One member of staff will teach “Energy transfers in and between organisms” and “Genetics, populations, evolution and ecosystems”. The other member of staff will teach “Organisms respond to changes in their internal and external environments” and “The control of gene expression”.

Practical work is at the heart of biology and during the course pupils will carry out a range of practical activities covering a diversity of techniques and using a range of apparatus. There are a minimum number of required practical activities set by the Examination Board which the pupils will cover during the course. The principles of these practical activities will be tested as part of their written examination papers and pupils will be expected to keep a practical note book. Assuming that pupils meet the minimum criteria for the practical activities, they should also receive a Practical Endorsement, separate to their A-level grade, at the end of the course.

Ecological sampling techniques form an important part of the course and ideally pupils should get an opportunity to practise a range of techniques in a number of different habitats. We therefore expect the pupils to take part in a residential field trip to Orierton Field Centre in September of the Upper Sixth. The provisional cost for this trip is approximately £400.

Outside of normal lessons the Biology department will organise a number of guest speakers, revision sessions, extension sessions and sessions to help prepare for medical applications. There will hopefully also be the opportunity to join a major overseas expedition.

Biology is one of the most popular A level subjects in the country and pupils study a wide range of other subjects along with it. Studying Chemistry with Biology in the sixth form probably opens up a greater range of university courses but it is not essential. Biology is a good choice of subject for people who want a career in health and clinical professions, such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, physiotherapy, pharmacy, optometry, nursing, zoology, marine biology or forensic science.

Ben Whitworth ben.whitworth@abingdon.org.uk

BUSINESS

Specification: Edexcel

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/business-2015.html>

The A Level Business course focuses on how to run and manage a modern business successfully in a dynamic and truly global environment. The course will introduce students to a wide range of theory, case studies and themes relevant to international business in the 21st Century. It is both an engaging and challenging A Level, perfect for those interested in management, finance, marketing, entrepreneurship and corporate culture.

The course follows the Edexcel A Level specification and is split into four key themes, as outlined below. Themes 1 and 2 will be covered in year one of the A Level course and themes 3 and 4 will be covered in year two.

- Theme 1 – Marketing and People. This covers meeting customer needs, the market, the marketing mix and strategy, managing people, motivation, recruitment and selection, organisational design, leadership and entrepreneurship.
- Theme 2 – Managing business activities. This covers raising finance, financial planning, including break-even analysis, budgets and sales forecasting, managing finances, including profit and liquidity, resource management, stock control, production and efficiency, quality and external influences on business, including the economy and legislation.
- Theme 3 – Business decisions and strategy. This covers business objectives and strategy, business growth, mergers and takeovers, decision-making techniques such as investment appraisal, critical path analysis and decision trees, corporate culture, business ethics, competitiveness and managing change.
- Theme 4 – Global business. This covers globalisation, global markets and business expansion, global marketing and the operations of multinational corporations.

The course is assessed through three exam papers sat at the end of the two year A Level. Paper 1 covers Marketing, People and Global Business (Themes 1 and 4 from above). Paper 2 covers Business Activities, Decisions and Strategy (Themes 2 and 3 from above). Paper 3 covers Investigating a Business in a Competitive Environment and is based on a pre-released context on which students carry out their own research and which will take the form of a particular industry. This paper will cover theory from all four themes from above.

Teaching in Business classes is varied and engaging. Lessons will typically include presentations, pair and group work, case studies, videos, research tasks, computer based activities and class discussions.

A Level Business requires a reasonable level of numeracy and involves more numerical work than Economics. However, the course tests the understanding of modern business and not Mathematics, and the important skill is to be able to understand and apply the figures to the business being studied. Students should also be good at conveying their ideas on paper with clarity and structuring their arguments in a logical manner. The ability to think critically is also advantageous. Significant numbers of our pupils go on to read business and management related courses at university.

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CHEMISTRY

Edexcel A level Chemistry (9CH0).

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/chemistry-2015.html>

The aim of the Chemistry Department at Abingdon is to provide a course that is intellectually stimulating as well as providing a strong foundation for future study. The course throughout the Sixth Form builds on the ideas and knowledge laid down during the GCSE years. As at GCSE, developing a good grasp of fundamental principles involved in the subject is highly important. The factual base of the subject is supported by practical work, and by an emphasis on experimental evidence that backs up our knowledge and understanding of the subject. This will include the study of some modern instrumental techniques such as Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy and how chemistry impacts on society.

The course starts off by expanding the understanding of the key building blocks of the subject – for example electron configuration, structure and bonding, energetics – before moving onto looking in detail at important areas such as transition metal chemistry, carbonyl chemistry, entropy and acid-base chemistry.

The assessment scheme consists of three papers all taken at the end of the Upper Sixth.

Paper 1: Advanced inorganic and physical chemistry (30% of the total marks)

Paper 2: Advanced organic and physical chemistry (30% of the total marks)

Paper 3: General and practical principles in chemistry (40% of the total marks)

There is no practical coursework but there are a number of core practicals that have to be completed over the two year course. Questions in the examination papers will be asked that relate to practical concepts. Practical work will remain an essential feature of the teaching of the subject and the department is well-resourced for the expanded range and demand of the practicals that are completed.

To develop subject knowledge beyond the syllabus and help to prepare students for further studies a regular program of lectures is run by the department and students prepared for both the Lower Sixth C3L6 challenge and the Upper Sixth Chemistry Olympiad.

The A level course is ideally suited to students who performed strongly in the middle school and who are looking forward to really developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

There is significant mathematical content and a strong mathematical background would be desirable for students wanting to take this course.

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CLASSICAL LANGUAGES: Latin and Greek

OCR Classics: Latin (H039 for AS; H439 for A level)

OCR Classics: Classical Greek (H040 for AS; H440 for A level)

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-latin-h043-h443-from-2016/>

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-classical-greek-h044-h444-from-2016/>

Latin and Greek are demanding A level subjects, but ones which are endlessly rewarding. The chance to read timelessly powerful texts in the original is hugely exciting, whether it be Sophocles' painfully dramatic explorations of the human condition, Tacitus' scathing exposé of the Roman imperial system, Homer's epic yet profoundly human perspective on war and its consequences, or Vergil's triumph in the impossible challenge of writing a sequel to Homer in his Roman national epic, the *Aeneid*.

The pattern of the courses for Latin and Greek is identical and we will be following the new OCR syllabuses. There are four papers in total, two language papers carrying a 50% weighting, and two literature papers (one prose and one verse) making up the other 50%.

The language element expects candidates to build on the skills they have developed at GCSE so that after the two years they are able to tackle the translation of actual passages of Latin and Greek authors. There is a greater focus on understanding the way in which the languages work, whether that is through linguistic comprehension or translating English into Latin or Greek. Indeed, on the linguistic side, the aim of the courses is that those who take the A level are at the point where they are happy to take on the challenge of reading any Latin or Greek text independently and make their teachers a redundant presence!

These courses will offer plenty of opportunity to read beyond the syllabus: indeed the department sees it as an essential element to the study of the subject that the syllabus provides a framework for pupils to pursue their own interests rather than a straitjacket to restrict them. However, the literature that is actually on the syllabus includes some of the finest authors in the classical canon, such as Vergil's *Aeneid*, Ovid and Tacitus in Latin and Homer, Sophocles and Thucydides in Greek.

The teaching of each group will usually be split between two teachers in the L6 and three in the U6 to provide a range of approaches and responses to the literature. The department is keen to encourage pupils to see the importance of the study of the past to an understanding of the present, and to this end runs annual Classics trips abroad (recent destinations have included Croatia, Provence, Tunisia, Italy, Greece, Sicily, Turkey and Crete) as well as trips to the British Museum and to Greek drama productions in Oxford and London. Pupils also attend A level conferences of relevance to their set texts where possible, and speakers are regularly invited to the school to talk on a variety of associated topics.

We expect boys to own a copy of a particular dictionary and grammar in the language(s) they are studying, which we obtain for them at the start of the lower sixth and which they will need throughout the sixth form.

Latin and Greek can be – and are – studied in combination with just about every subject offered in the Sixth Form at Abingdon; they complement studies in both the arts and sciences. The literature covers a wide range of human experience, and the skills required for the study of a classical language are much in demand amongst employers, not only in ‘traditional’ professions (such as the civil service, accountancy, the law, management and teaching) but also in financial institutions and computing firms. Employers realise that Classicists have an eye for detail and a great deal of adaptability. Recent research has shown that graduates with degrees in Classical languages are more likely to be in employment immediately after university than any other graduates.

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COMPUTER SCIENCE

AQA Computer Science (A-level 7517)

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/computer-science-and-it/as-and-a-level/computer-science-7516-7517>

A Level computer science covers both practical (programming approx. 60%) and theoretical (approx. 40%) aspects of computing. The Lower Sixth concentrates on getting a really good grasp of programming and using Python to investigate the important constructs used in computer science. By the end of the Lower Sixth you should be able to choose a suitable individual project, in order to showcase what you have learned. Fifty hours of class time will be allocated to this project. Students choose a problem of interest to them and design and program a solution. The project may be from any area - from a business management solution to programming hardware. The more theoretical aspects of computer science are quite mathematical (set theory, vectors, number systems etc) and students need good mathematical skills.

Having a GCSE in CS will help you make a positive start to the course but other students will do well provided they are prepared to work steadily at their programming. Students without GCSE should speak with Dr Willis to get advice on how to hit the ground running in September. You will need an A grade in GCSE Mathematics or equivalent. Students will need their own laptop computer (Windows/Mac/Linux i.e. not a Chromebook).

Course Content A Level

Unit 1 (40% assessed using 150 minute online exam involving programming):

1. Fundamentals of programming
2. Fundamentals of data structures
3. Fundamentals of algorithms
4. Theory of computation

Unit 2 (40% assessed using 150 minute written exam):

5. Fundamentals of data representation
6. Fundamentals of computer systems

7. Fundamentals of computer organisation and architecture
8. Consequences of uses of computing
9. Fundamentals of communication and networking
10. Fundamentals of databases
11. Big Data
12. Fundamentals of functional programming

The Project (20% of A-Level):

13. Systematic approach to problem solving
14. Non-exam assessment - the computing practical project

These days, whatever you are studying you will be using computers to look at data or to solve a problem. A Level Computer Science gives you those skills but also helps you appreciate the thinking behind the tools and the ability to design and craft new ones. Computer Science is now recognised by the Russell Group as a “useful” A Level subject for entry to 21 different courses, from Medicine and Optometry to Engineering.

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DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

AQA Design & Technology (Product Design) (A-level 7552)

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/design-and-technology/as-and-a-level/design-and-technology-product-design-7552>

The Design and Technology A-Level is a new qualification with the first pupils being examined in 2019. The revised specification is a much improved qualification which will give pupils an insight into the role of a commercial designer and give them practical experience and understanding about technical principles and manufacturing processes. The course will suit pupils with an interest in product design development, a curiosity of how products are designed and manufactured and those with a flair for creativity. It gives a good background to all those interested in engineering or designing in its widest sense. The A-level is a natural progression from the GCSE 9-1 Design & Technology course and as such builds upon the practical skills and processes covered at GCSE. It is therefore highly recommended that boys have completed the GCSE or equivalent.

NEA (Non Examined Unit) (50% of the A-Level)

There is only one assessed coursework piece in the new A-Level, although a smaller product design task will be undertaken in the Lower Sixth. This first project will be a vehicle to cover the majority of the theory work through a practical experience. Pupils will develop a new concept for a company of their choice following the design process of research, idea generation and production of a prototype. They will study the design process, learn to visually communicate and work in CAD to a high level.

Summer term of the lower sixth will see the launch of the major project. This practical unit draws together all of the knowledge and experience of the course and allows pupils to tackle their own substantial design study. The expectation is that the prototype they produce is of commercial viability and quality. The subject area and direction is identified entirely by the pupil with guidance from their subject teacher, but provides them with the opportunity to produce an outstanding piece of practical work. Submission is through an electronic portfolio and practical piece.

Paper 1: Core Technical Principles

(25% of the A Level) (2 ½ hours)

This theory paper will cover the breadth of the specification through a combination of short answer, multiple choice and extended written response. Students will be required to analyse products and apply their knowledge and understanding of material properties and modern manufacturing processes

**Paper 2: Specialist knowledge, Technical & designing principles.
(25% of the A Level) (1 ½ hours)**

This theory paper focuses on existing designers, their influences and the products they have produced. It also studies the major design movements of the last century and looks forward to the decisions likely to face the next generation of engineers and designers.

The written papers have maths content; 15% of the marks across the two papers are from maths-based questions in a familiar design context. It is a key skill necessary in Design & Technology and it is expected that candidates will have secure GCSE knowledge.

The course, although heavily biased towards practical work does have an equal element of theory and design folio content. Pupils will need good time management skills and must be willing to work consistently across the year. Pupils have access to the department outside of lessons, and many thrive in the design studio feel to the department. The course is designed to be a complementary subject to Mathematics and Physics and students looking to read Engineering at University will find it now is often listed as a relevant fourth A-Level.

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DRAMA AND THEATRE

Edexcel GCE in Drama and Theatre (9DR0)

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/drama-and-theatre-2016.html>

Drama and Theatre A Level combines boys from Abingdon and girls from St Helen's in classes taught jointly by drama teachers at both schools. Pupils are required to see a number of plays and take part in productions as part of the assessment. They are also encouraged to participate in extra-curricular productions staged at both schools, or beyond them (for example, the National Youth Theatre). Drama often attracts those who also have an interest in film and are members of the Abingdon Film Unit. Drama is demanding in terms of your out-of-school time, so a strong and demonstrable commitment is essential, although prior study of the subject at GCSE is not always an absolute requirement.

Drama is a practical, intellectual and artistic subject. It has a three-dimensional character: you need to be able to bring ideas to life as a performer; you need a good visual, aural and spatial imagination; you also need to be able to analyse texts and write essays. Above all, you need to be able to work well with others and share your ideas.

The first term at St Helen's features practical study of a set play, from the perspectives of an actor and designer as preparation for Section B of the written paper (Component 3). The ideas of a key theatre practitioner are studied alongside an extract from a second play as starting points for devising an original piece of theatre (Component 1). You will also see at least one live theatre production and answer questions requiring skills of analysis and evaluation for Component 3, Section A. In the second term, you prepare for the devised performance. The devised performance is internally assessed during the summer term. Students then complete the first draft

of a 3,000 word portfolio (Component 1) and study a second set play and the ideas of another theatre practitioner for Component 3, Section B. Study for all three sections of the written paper is completed in the first term of the U6, alongside preparation for Component 2, a group performance of a play extract and a monologue, both of which are assessed by a visiting examiner in March. The first half of the summer term sees final preparations for the written paper in June.

Drama and Theatre combines well with almost any other A Level subject, although it most commonly accompanies other Arts subjects such as English, Art, Music, History or Languages. It promotes creativity, problem-solving, teamwork and presentation skills, all of which are much in demand in the workplace. People who take this course often go on to study Drama at university, either on its own, or in combination with another subject. Popular destinations for our Drama and Theatre students are Exeter, Leeds, Warwick, East Anglia, Bristol and Royal Holloway. Afterwards, some pursue careers as actors, writers or directors, or go in other directions (musicians, teachers, broadcasters, journalists, filmmakers). Some go straight to specialist drama schools with a view to making a career as actors.

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ECONOMICS

Specification: Edexcel A

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/economics-a-2015.html>

Economics is an academically rigorous A-level that explores issues of contemporary relevance such as:

- What will happen after Brexit?
- Why do some countries grow faster than others?
- How should the government tackle binge drinking?
- Why does the UK have a National Health Service (NHS)?
- Is the fall in the value of the pound against the Euro a cause for concern?
- Is China's growth a threat or an opportunity?
- Should the Bank of England raise the UK's interest rate?

Traditionally, economics is divided into two areas: micro and macroeconomics. The former concentrates upon the actions of the individual decision maker, such as the consumer, firm or worker, whilst the latter focuses upon the collective actions of economic agents in areas such as government, and national and international economies. The Edexcel A Level specification is split into four themes, two of which cover microeconomics (themes 1 and 3) and two of which cover macroeconomics (themes 2 and 4). Themes 1 and 2 will be covered in year one of the A Level course and themes 3 and 4 will be covered in year two.

- Theme 1 – Introduction to markets and market failure. This covers concepts such as the basic economic problem, demand and supply analysis, market failure and government intervention.
- Theme 2 – The UK economy – performance and policies. This covers concepts such as economic growth, inflation, employment and unemployment and the balance of payments, along with the macroeconomic policies of the UK government.
- Theme 3 – Business behaviour and the labour market. This covers business growth and objectives, revenues costs and profits, market structures such as monopoly and perfect competition, and labour market economics.

- Theme 4 – A global perspective. This covers international economics concepts such as globalisation, trade, exchange rates, poverty, inequality, economic development and the role of financial markets.

Teaching in Economics classes is varied and engaging. Lessons will typically include presentations, pair and group work, case studies, videos, research tasks, computer based activities and class discussions. *Griffenomics* is a biannual, pupil-led economics magazine and the department also runs extension classes to stretch the most able.

Economics fits easily with a wide variety of other A Level subjects because it combines the theoretical rigour of the sciences with the independence of mind fostered by the arts. At A Level pupils must be able to think logically and in the abstract but do not have to deal with complicated mathematics. However, to study Economics at a Russell Group University, Mathematics A Level is usually a requirement. Good economists must be able to think logically, write clearly and have an interest in current affairs. In the words of Keynes: “Economics is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of the mind, a technique of thinking which helps its possessor to draw correct conclusions”.

Note: since September 2018, Abingdon has been responsible for the teaching of Economics to both Abingdon and St Helen’s pupils. This means that some sets, but not all, will be a mix of boys and girls.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE

OCR GCE in English Literature A Level (H472)

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/171200-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-english-literature-h472.pdf>

English Literature A Level is a lively, varied and widely respected academic qualification. It is an excellent gateway subject for a very wide range of degrees and careers, quite apart from being a highly enjoyable and intellectually stimulating course in its own right. Broadly speaking, it is the study of great novels, plays and poetry and their social, political and historical context. Like other humanities subjects, English Literature provides opportunities to debate the big questions that have dominated intellectual discourse for centuries.

English Literature lessons in the Sixth Form are interactive and discussion-based. We study a wonderfully broad range of texts, ranging from classics from the literary canon to a number of post-1900 works. These include *Hamlet*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *A Farewell to Arms* for the exams, and a range of modern texts for coursework. Over the two-year course, boys study six texts for two essay based examinations, which make up 80% of the final grade, and a further three texts for coursework, which make up the final 20%.

Pupils wishing to study English Literature A Level should, above all, enjoy analysing and discussing texts and the contextual factors that surround them. We particularly welcome boys who are willing to develop and put forward their own views, and who enjoy reading and writing. The course will help pupils to develop the essential skills of arguing and discussing in a clear and logical way, orally and on paper, and of being able to make a sensitive and informed analysis.

The English Department also offers a wide range of extracurricular opportunities for boys in the Sixth Form to enhance and broaden their experience of English Literature. Boys will experience visits to the theatre or exhibitions, and other recent trips have included watching a performance of *Equus* at Trafalgar Studios in the West End, as well as an audience with the novelist Sebastian Faulks. We are fortunate to be able to regularly offer the boys the opportunity to watch National Theatre Live productions, such as encore screenings of *King Lear* and *Richard II*, and we also use the theatre for in-school cinema screenings of set texts, including *Hamlet*. In addition, boys have the chance to listen to visiting authors and academics. Many of our A Level students develop their creative and journalistic skills by getting involved in the production of *Words and That*, an arts magazine, and *The Martlet*, a current affairs newspaper, run by the department. We also run a joint literary society with St Helen's, where pupils get the chance to discuss a wide range of literary texts, and the two schools hold a joint Literature Dinner. There are two weekly debating societies open to Sixth Formers and frequent debating competitions with other schools.

English Literature traditionally stands with Mathematics as one of the two most generally useful A Levels. It goes very well with classical and modern languages and with History, Philosophy, Geography and Economics. It is an obviously complementary subject to the sciences, and is particularly useful for intending medical school applicants, for those aiming for Law, and for PPE candidates. In Upper School English Literature classes there is a good blend of those pupils who will continue studying English Literature at university, including Oxbridge, and those specializing in other subjects who recognise the importance of refining their analytical skills and the precision of their written expression. An English Literature degree leads to a surprising range of careers: it is largely regarded as evidence of a trained and reflective mind.

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GEOGRAPHY

OCR GCE in Geography (OCR H481)

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-geography-h081-h481-from-2016/>

Geography is a dynamic, academic subject that is constantly evolving. The Geography Department at Abingdon works hard to stay abreast of contemporary geographical issues, delivering lessons that are up-to-date and underpinned with high expectations and the most recent pedagogical ideas. These are best reflected in the rigorous A Level, which tackles many contemporary issues that are relevant to society today:

- environmental responsibility
- global interdependence
- cultural understanding and tolerance
- commerce, trade and industry
- population and disease

Geography is a popular option in the sixth form at Abingdon and in recent years the department has achieved excellent results. Many sixth formers choose to read Geography or a geographically related degree course subsequently at university including Oxbridge.

This linear course consists of 3 examination papers and an Independent Investigation.

Physical Systems (Paper 1 - 24%): this paper examines the new core content of the water cycle and carbon cycle and the critical interactions that exist to support life on Earth. In addition, one landscape system is examined in depth chosen from either coasts, glacial or arid environments. Key concepts within this paper include environmental sustainability and climate change as well as looking at some of the core physical processes that enable us to understand how the world around us works. Particular focus is on the Tropical Rainforest and the Arctic Tundra.

Human Interactions (Paper 2 – 24%): this paper examines the new core content of ‘Changing Spaces: Making Places’. This broad theme explores the relationships and connections between people, the economy, and society and how these contribute to creating places. Some of the themes covered here include migration, inequality, role of the media, TNCs, crime and a range of international institutions. The second part of this paper, Global Connections, requires two optional themes to be studied from two paired options: Global Systems - either International Trade or Global Migration and Global Governance - either Human Rights or Power and Borders. This paper examines many contemporary issues so relevant to society and the global citizen today.

Geographical Debates (paper 3 – 32%): this paper examines some of the most dynamic issues that affect the planet and mankind. Two options are studied from five options: Climate Change, Disease Dilemmas, Exploring Oceans, Future of Food & Hazardous Earth. Disease Dilemmas could not be a more appropriate area for study at the moment, with the A Level focusing on the epidemiological transition of a variety of diseases as well as the geographical factors that influence disease transmission. Earth Hazards is the other topic currently studied, with pupils assessing the degree to which Earth Hazards are physical phenomena or whether they are amplified by population growth and other human factors.

Independent Investigation (20%): with guidance from geography staff, an independent investigation will be undertaken culminating in the sub-mission of a written report (3000 – 4000 words in length). This is excellent preparation for independent learning and university study. The use of GIS will be central to the completion of the report. There is a residential field-trip to accompany this part of the course.

Geography can be studied in combination with most subjects in the sixth form. Maths, Economics, Biology, Chemistry, Politics and History certainly complement Geography very well.

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HISTORY

OCR History A – H105, H505

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-history-a-h105-h505-from-2015/>

Each student will study three modules over two years (British and non-British Period studies with one teacher and a 200 year Themes paper with another). They will also choose a coursework topic to be completed in the Upper-Sixth. The teaching week will be divided between two teachers. In total the students cover three modules and a coursework essay. The department is well resourced and the teaching is lively and enthusiastic. The teaching staff are knowledgeable and have a real passion for their subject and students should enjoy themselves as well as learn a lot.

In the sixth form students will study a British period studies paper and a non-British period study topic with one teacher and also begin the 200+ year Themes paper with another. There are a number of topics. British Period Study topics will include the Tudors and the Stuarts and non-British will include the French Revolution and Napoleon, and the American Revolution. The themes paper sees pupils study China and its rulers, 1839 to 1989. (not Russia or Civil Rights). Students will be tested on source-skills, interpretations and essay writing in the A2 exams. All modules will require extensive reading around the class topics and pupils should be prepared for this. The coursework essay is 4000 words and they can choose any title from the British papers, American Revolution, French Revolution and Napoleon, or from Chinese history.

Exams are at the end of 2 years and consist of three papers of between 1 hour and 2-3 hours length. Students should note they will not be able to choose which modules they do-these are assigned on a block basis so cannot be swapped about. Teachers deliver units according to their expertise.

The subject combines well with any of the other Humanities subjects such as English, Philosophy or Geography but also with Modern Languages and Classics. We often get students studying science subjects choosing to do History as their fourth subject. Students go on to study History at university but it is also useful for students hoping to study HSPS, Law, PPE, PPP, Economics and various other courses that require good literacy and analytical skills. We usually have between ten and twenty History applicants for undergraduate study.

The department offers a well-attended series of lectures in the History Society for students who want to engage with the subject at a deeper level and extension classes at lower-sixth as well as Oxbridge lessons in the upper-sixth. We are well resourced with excellent ICT and library facilities and remain a popular option with sixth-formers.

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MATHEMATICS

Edexcel Mathematics 9MA0 and Further Mathematics 9FM0

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/mathematics-2017.html#tab-1>

Mathematics is one of the most generally useful A level subjects, fitting with many combinations of other subjects. It is essential for physicists and engineers, valuable to chemists, biologists, economists and geographers, and can help to broaden the education of those taking arts subjects. However, it is also a fascinating subject in its own right. Mathematics is recognised as requiring a logical and rational approach as well as demanding dedication and determination to be successful. Research into graduate careers has shown Mathematics graduates to be amongst the highest earners after graduation.

Abingdon is a lively place to study Mathematics. Mathematicians have fortnightly problem solving lessons and Further Maths students take part in the Senior Maths Challenge competition, with a separate team being prepared for the Senior Team Maths Challenge, both administered by the UK Maths Trust. Over recent years Abingdon has consistently been amongst the regional winners in this competition progressing to the National Finals. Teams of boys also compete in the Ritangle competition in November of each year and we also prepare a team for the Princeton Maths Challenge competition - a week-long competition which requires the production of proofs for some rather fiendish problems. There is an enrichment club held weekly within the department, allowing keen mathematicians to meet together to solve interesting problems.

Further Mathematicians are also given the opportunity to study for the extension MAT/STEP/AEA papers in the Upper Sixth, and preparation and support is given.

Success at A level is dependent on a good understanding of concepts studied in GCSE or IGCSE. Fluency in algebra is very important as is a general enthusiasm to tackle mathematical problems. Understanding in mathematics often takes time to develop, so boys need to be willing to persevere and ready to practise techniques.

Choosing Single Maths or Further Maths at Abingdon

There are two different and independent routes to studying Maths at Abingdon – the Single Maths route, and the Further Maths route. Each counts as one choice, except in some very specific circumstances. It is quite possible to start on the Further Maths route and move onto the Single Maths route but almost impossible the other way round.

Single Maths

The lower sixth single mathematics course contains the beginning topics in Pure Maths. In addition there will be some content from Applied Maths in Mechanics and Statistics. These topics will be examined by internal exams at the end of the L6th. No external units are examined at the end of the L6th.

The Upper Sixth will see the bulk of the more advanced Pure Maths material taught along with the remaining topics from Mechanics and Statistics.

Pure mathematics covers topics including algebraic techniques, calculus and trigonometry. The applied units look at how mathematical techniques can be used to model the external world - statistics examines situations which include an element of randomness and how probabilistic conclusions can be drawn in these situations, while mechanics examines motion and the forces which cause motion.

Further Mathematics

This course is intended for able mathematicians. It leads to two A levels: Mathematics and Further Mathematics. It is a very rapidly paced and challenging course. It is highly recommended for those who may later be considering university courses or careers in fields including mathematics, the sciences, economics, computation or engineering.

Many of those who study Further Mathematics have already studied Maths beyond GCSE, such as Additional Maths. Students who have studied beyond the GCSE or IGCSE syllabus should start on the faster route that is followed by taking Maths and Further Maths as a single option. This is, however, not a requirement for studying Further Maths, and other options can be discussed on an individual basis.

Further Mathematics gives an opportunity to develop greater breadth in techniques of algebra, trigonometry and calculus, plus giving the opportunity to look at more diverse topics such as complex numbers, polar coordinates and series. In addition students extend their study of Mechanics and there is the possibility of studying further Statistics options or studying some Decision Mathematics too.

Boys studying Further Mathematics typically have an extra lesson per week than single subject mathematicians. All papers are examined at the end of the upper sixth.

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MODERN LANGUAGES: French, German and Spanish

Cambridge International Level 3 Pre-U Certificate in Modern Foreign Languages

<http://www.cie.org.uk/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-advanced/cambridge-pre-u/subjects/#>

French Principal Course 9779

German Principal Course 9780

Spanish Principal Course 9781

A Pre-U language course provides challenging academic training and a stepping-stone to further study. Since language qualifications are at a premium in a country notoriously short of good linguists, studying a language to Pre-U will make you highly employable in a vast range of professions. As well as enhancing your CV, understanding and speaking a foreign language will enrich your life in many ways. You will be able to read novels, poems, plays and articles in a foreign language and watch foreign films in the original version. You will be able to travel around French, German and Spanish speaking countries, talking to people in their own language and discovering the historical and cultural heritage of the country. If you are considering a gap year abroad, perhaps in South America or at a ski resort, a Pre-U Level in French, German or Spanish can only be a bonus. On the employment front, being able to converse with clients in their own language and being aware of cultural sensitivities will give you the edge in any business role. Moreover, as a linguist, you will easily be able to work abroad. A video recording of our very informative careers' symposium with OA linguists can be viewed by Abingdon students here: <https://abingdon.fireflycloud.net/career-guidance/careers-and-foreign-languages>.

The main topic areas that will be discussed both from a general point of view and from a specifically French/ German/ Spanish context are as follows:

- Human relationships; family; generation gap; young people
- Patterns of daily life; urban and rural life; the media; food and drink; law and order; religion and belief; health and fitness
- Work and leisure; equality of opportunity; employment and unemployment; sport; travel and tourism; education; cultural life/heritage
- War and peace; the developing world
- Medical advances; scientific and technological innovation
- The environment; conservation; pollution
- Contemporary aspects of the country or countries where the language is spoken

In addition to these general topics, you will study two films and / or texts in a particular topic area and one literary text.

Sixth form groups are taught for a total of ten lessons per cycle, usually by two teachers. You will learn about the language in more depth, broaden your vocabulary and improve your understanding of grammar. You will find out about French/ German/ Spanish culture and history and learn to discuss issues in the target language. You will speak in the target language as much as possible in every lesson and you will work regularly with our foreign language assistants. As well as classroom resources, we use television programmes, films, material from the web, magazine articles, etc. You will be encouraged to read magazines and newspapers and to conduct internet research for up-to-date information. You will be introduced to literature in the language you are studying – novels, plays and poems. You will discuss news items and do project work. You will be encouraged to visit France, Germany or Spain, either by your own arrangement or through the department's study trips to France, Spain and Germany. In addition to study trips

abroad, the department offers extra-curricular language based events such as visits to the theatre and cinema, film screenings and food tasting organised by our joint MFL Society with St. Helen's.

Assessment is by examination at the end of the upper sixth. There are four units that are all equally weighted:

- **Unit 1 Speaking** (16 minutes) – externally assessed. You prepare a presentation on a topic of your choice that links to the target language. This is then followed with a conversation based on the topic presented. In addition there is a discussion based on an article of about 200 words and its related themes. The article is intended to be a springboard for discussion.
- **Unit 2 Reading & Listening** (2 hours 15 minutes). You need to respond to target-language based articles. In the reading section there is one passage with questions in the target language, one with questions in English and a re-translation from English into the target language of about 75 words. In the listening section there is one recording with questions in the target language, one with questions in English and a guided summary of a recording of 250 words. The written summary should be no longer than 100 words. You have control of your own listening equipment and may listen as often as you wish.
- **Unit 3 Writing & Usage** (2 hours 15 minutes). **Writing** – You will write one discursive essay of 350 – 450 words. You may choose your essay title from a list of 5 prescribed titles. It is expected that relevant examples will be given from the areas of the world where the target language is spoken. Linguistic accuracy will be expected as well as development and organisation of ideas. **Usage** – In this section of the paper there is one verb test, one question where you are required to transform sentences without changing the original meaning and one cloze test of twenty multiple-choice questions on a range of grammatical points.
- **Unit 4 Topics & Texts** (2 hours 30 minutes). **Topics** The first section of this examination tests your knowledge of the cultural topic you have studied and requires a written response of between 350 to 500 words in the target language. **Texts** The second section tests your knowledge of the literary text studied through one essay of 450 to 600 words written in English.

A Pre-U qualification in foreign languages can lead to many different paths at university. You can take a traditional modern languages degree, either single or joint honours. For the languages combined in joint honours either or both have been studied in the sixth form or one can be started *ab initio* at university. You can also combine a language with many other subjects such as Business, Law and Engineering. All these courses usually involve a year spent studying or working abroad. Even if you do not study languages as an academic subject at university, if you have a language at Pre-U Level, you would still have the option of studying your chosen subject at a university abroad. If you want to apply for Oxford and Cambridge language degree courses, Abingdon provides extra classes during which you will study classic literary works and explore grammatical concepts more deeply.

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MUSIC

OCR MUSIC A Level (H543)

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/219397-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-music-h543.pdf>

Abingdon is proud of its musical heritage and reputation as a leading music department of the local area and further afield. For experienced musicians, the course offers an opportunity to understand at a deeper level the music that they are playing regularly in ensembles and as soloists.

All potential candidates should have at least one major practical study (instrumental or vocal). All boys will be expected to take a lively active part in the school's music making in both vocal and instrumental fields. Choral experience is considered an essential aspect of the musicianship required to perform well in the aural section of the Listening and Appraising written paper.

The course develops further the three areas of musical experience targeted at GCSE, namely performing (25% or 35%), composing (35% or 25%), and listening and appraising (40%). The new OCR course, in common with other A Level syllabuses, gives slightly extra weight in the Listening and Appraising unit.

The new **Performing** unit exists in two versions of different weightings - Option A 25%, Option B 35%. Assessment is by means of a submitted audio-visual recording. Option A is a recital lasting 6 to 9 minutes, whilst Option B is 10 to 15 minutes and includes an extra piece, called a focused study, designed to show a further level of understanding of the style and context of their chosen instrument. These filmed recitals take place towards the end of the Lent Term of the Upper Sixth.

The **Composing** unit is weighted according to the choice made in Performing (above) and comprises Option A 35% and Option B 25%. The first embraces three compositions, both original composing techniques (taught by Abingdon's Composer in Residence) and stylistic techniques, requiring the understanding of techniques related to areas of study. The second, Option B requires just two compositions and no stylistic techniques exercises. Portfolios of compositions and exercises are internally marked and submitted for external moderation in early May.

The **Listening and Appraising** unit is assessed through a written examination (2 hrs 30 mins). The paper has five sections. Section A is based on unfamiliar aural extracts, Section B on aural extracts from the Set Works studied and Section C comprises two essays based on the two areas of study and set works that will be chosen from the six available.

The department's many concerts and large variety of ensembles offer essential experience, as well as concerts, opera trips and master classes, which enhance musical understanding and matters of interpretation.

Music A Level is a subject that mixes well with a range of others including arts and sciences and over the years, in addition to music, boys have gone on to read a wide variety of subjects at university, including Law, Medicine, Maths/Science, Languages, Art etc. Good university music departments exist at Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, York, Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham, London, Southampton, Nottingham and others. Abingdon boys regularly gain places and awards (choral and organ) at Oxbridge. Careers in music include Publishing, Teaching, The Media, and Performing but employers in many fields increasingly value the creative and communicative skills that are developed through the study and performance of music.

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PHYSICS

Edexcel Physics A Level (9PH0)

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/content/demo/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/physics-2015.html>

Physics is the fundamental science, explaining everything from the structure of the atom to the nature, and fate of the universe. As well as the seemingly esoteric worlds of quantum and particle physics, the course also covers topics from engineering to astrophysics.

In the lower sixth students follow on from GCSE to study forces and motion in 2 dimensions, with a particular on experimental skills. They also learn about torque, moments and power, before an introduction to materials science, an important foundation for any engineering course. Students learn the tools to analyse complex electrical circuits, including the construction of simple sensor circuits. Wave theory teaches superposition and interference, before the bizarre world of Quantum physics is introduced.

In the upper sixth, the course becomes more challenging, with a greater emphasis on mathematics. We study fields (gravitational, electric and magnetic), oscillations and thermal physics, as well as sections on nuclear physics and the universe. Practical skills are integral to the course. It is essential for the course that certain practicals are completed and they are assessed in the final synoptic paper

The exam papers include a mixture of multiple-choice, short open, open-response, calculations and extended writing questions.

It does not matter if a candidate has done double award science or single subject physics. It is more important that a candidate shows their ability by getting at least A grades in maths as well as science GCSEs. To succeed at physics A-level it is expected that a candidate has a good grounding in mathematics. A-level maths really helps, but is not essential for A-level physics, however university courses in physics and engineering will usually expect mathematics A-level as well.

The department offers regular lectures on aspects of physics and engineering as well as occasional trips to offer further study.

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PHILOSOPHY

AQA GCE Philosophy 2175

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/philosophy/as-and-a-level/philosophy-7172/specification-at-a-glance>

Philosophy will appeal to any student with an interest in ideas, in thinking at a more subtle level about the nature of the world, of the acquisition of knowledge, of divinity, freedom and morality. In Philosophy the successful student is often ready to develop a detailed academic approach to the study of challenging concepts, and have a readiness to take ideas further through study of individual philosophers. Philosophy requires critical thinking and constructive argument, both orally and on paper, so is relevant and useful for all academic disciplines and future careers. It is instructive that at University level Philosophy is commonly studied as a joint honours, with such diverse subjects as Mathematics and Theology. This is because it is a study of how we think and know and argue, and is often best seen as a subject that enables the student to better understand other academic disciplines. Students are encouraged to take their studies further in any appropriate direction, in particular through the school's Edmund society, writing for the school's Philosophy magazine 'The Axiom' and through external lectures.

Lower Sixth

Firstly, we examine Epistemology.

This looks at perception and knowledge, considering both how we apprehend the world and what we mean when we say we know something about it.

Secondly we examine Moral Philosophy. In which, we analyse the most influential ethical theories ranging from Plato to Utilitarianism, considering how they fare when set against practical questions involving such things as killing, deception and punishment.

Upper Sixth

Firstly we examine the Metaphysics of Religion.

This means looking at arguments for and against the existence of a higher being, from the highly logical to those based on our understanding of the world and morality.

We consider how such arguments work and how they may be analysed and evaluated. The concept of God and our use of language are also considered.

Secondly, we examine the Metaphysics of the Mind.

This focuses on the contrasting theories of dualism and physicalism, is the mind one with the brain, or separate?. Students are assessed in two 3-hour exams. The questions vary in their requirements from short, structured explanation to longer more open analysis.

Students will find this A Level challenging but rewarding, which will prepare them well for any Humanities based course at University, most obviously those wishing to study PPE or straight Philosophy.

There are no specific entry requirements for Philosophy, beyond those usually expected on joining the sixth form, but students should have a high level of English, be interested in debate, reading Philosophy and most importantly come with an open mind.

The Philosophy and Theology Department offers both Religious Studies and Philosophy. Students can only choose one or the other.

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POLITICS

AQA A Level Politics (7152)

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/government-and-politics/as-and-a-level/politics-7152>

What will you study?

During the two years you will study the institutions of the UK government, such as Parliament and the Prime Minister and the equivalent institutions in the United States, Congress and the Presidency for example. You will also examine the different aspects of political participation such as elections, political parties and group politics. In addition, you will learn about the ideologies that inspire different political systems, such as liberalism, socialism and conservatism.

What skills will you develop?

You will develop a range of skills, especially your analytical and evaluative faculties. The course will also develop your ability to express yourself in writing.

What other A-Levels does Politics go well with?

Politics combines well with humanities and social sciences, particularly History, Geography and Economics. It is also a very good companion for Modern Languages, especially if you are interested in International Relations.

What GCSEs and background should I have?

Politics is essentially an essay course and you have to be comfortable with extended writing. You should have a 7 or above in English and/or History. History is probably the subject closest related to Politics in terms of the skills required to do well. You should have an interest in current affairs.

What exam board do you use?

We teach the AQA Politics course. Politics is taught as a linear two year course with all examinations at the end of the two years. There will be three exams at the end of the course.

Do you offer any extension activities?

We run a variety of clubs that give our students an opportunity to extend their understanding of politics and hone their debating skill. These include a Model United Nations Society and a Senior Politics Society, where discuss a range of domestic and international political issues. We also encourage our students to enter essay competitions and offer preparation session for Oxbridge interviews. We offer a trip to Washington and New York trips and take our students on a visit to Parliament and the Supreme court in London.

What can I study at University with Politics A-level?

A-level Politics provides an excellent basis for higher education in a number of fields, including Law, History, Philosophy, PPE, Social Sciences as well as Politics and International Relations. Students who study Politics or International relations go on to a range of careers such as journalism, law, NGOs and the civil service. In recent years our students have gone on to study

politics related courses at Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol, Exeter, Durham, London School of Economics, King's College, Sussex, Manchester.

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St Helen and St Katharine

RELIGIOUS STUDIES: Philosophy and Ethics

OCR GCE Religious Studies: H573

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242913-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h573.pdf>

A-Level Religious Studies is the study of Philosophy of Religion, Religious Ethics and Developments in Religious Thought, which over the years has proved an increasingly popular and successful course. To succeed at A-Level a Religious Studies or equivalent GCSE is not necessary. The course requires no specific religious commitment, and can be studied by anyone with an enquiring mind. It certainly helps if you are willing to explore new ideas and discuss issues.

The successful student is usually motivated by the challenge of new ideas and a willingness to put in the work to develop an academic essay style. It is important to develop skills in both explanation of complex concepts and evaluation of scholarly argument.

It is a challenging academic subject that requires critical thinking and constructive argument, both orally and on paper. As such it is relevant and useful for all academic subjects and future careers. It has an affinity with many other A level subjects. For example, it shares subject matter with the sciences, and processes of thought and argument with the humanities and mathematics. It is useful and relevant to all manner of university courses and careers. It is particularly relevant to anyone considering medicine due to the significant coverage of medical ethical issues. It is also useful for those seeking to develop their communication skills, such as those considering law. Students are encouraged to attend the Edmund society, write for the Axiom (school Philosophy magazine) and there are twice yearly trips to conferences in Oxford.

Students will study for three papers: Philosophy of Religion, Religious Ethics and Developments of Religious Thought. The Philosophy course begins where philosophy itself begins: with Plato and Aristotle. The course broadens to cover a range of topics of relevance to the study of religious philosophy: Religious language; religious experience including arguments concerning miracles; aspects of the nature of God as omnipotent, omniscient, judge etc. It ends with challenges to belief in God: the problem of evil and the challenges of science. It is a wonderfully wide introduction to the subject, providing a very full foundation for further study.

The Ethics course begins with an introduction to moral philosophy, before covering the most significant ethical theories: Natural Law, Kant and Utilitarianism. The specifically Christian approach to ethics is then analysed before considering how the theory can be applied to questions raised by Euthanasia, Business Ethics and Sexual Ethics. The Religious Ethics course also looks at meta-ethics, a pure form of moral philosophy, before embarking on a study of two topics related to ethical theory: determinism and conscience. It adds a last ethical theory, virtue ethics, before applying all theory studied in the course to the challenging questions of the environment, business ethics and sexual morality. It provides a very focused foundation to the subject.

Developments in Religious Thought covers Augustinian's teaching on human nature, religious pluralism, knowledge of God's existence, the person of Jesus Christ, Christian moral principles and action and exploration of death and the afterlife. The wide range enables students to get a full grasp of the breadth of the subject.

The wide range between subtle philosophical ideas and practical application provides a challenging and practical course. Religious Studies is examined through three two hour papers on each of the sections, in which students answer two essay questions.

The Philosophy and Theology Department offers both Religious Studies and Philosophy. Students can choose one or the other - and not both.

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