



ABINGDON

## A Parent's Guide to Career Guidance at Abingdon School

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### INTRODUCTION

Abingdon School's Career Guidance Programme takes pupils aged 11-18 (Year 7 to Year 13) on a journey of self-discovery, helping them to:

- be in touch with their values and what is important to them
- grasp and gain insights into what is meant by 'career'
- identify potentially suitable future occupations
- make educational choices informed by career thinking and planning
- understand and experience the world of work
- develop key skills needed to gain employment
- prepare to live independently after leaving school

In short, our goal is to help every pupil think carefully about, and take practical steps towards realising, his future career.

The Career Guidance Programme combines printed and online career information resources with career thinking/planning lessons; employability skills workshops; financial education seminars; CV, cover letter and interview training and practice; one-to-one guidance meetings, and a wide range of events and activities, including talks by working professionals, an annual careers fair, several career advice evenings, two work experience schemes, and meetings with British Armed Forces careers advisers.

The career guidance section of the pupil intranet (Firefly) is a 'one-stop-shop' of links to recommended web sites for researching occupations; learning about different academic, vocational, and work-based educational options (post-16 and post-18) and their relevancy to career choices; searching for enrichment opportunities that give insight into career choices, and finding work experience placements, internships, apprenticeships, and school leaver programmes.

Every Year group enjoys a set of bespoke activities designed for its step in this journey, with one Year's activities smoothly transitioning into that of the next Year. This design ensures coherence from Year to Year and puts pupils in the best

position possible to make informed educational choices at the end of each key stage in their education: GSCE, A-Level, and all post-18 options, including Higher Education.

Supporting the delivery of the Career Guidance Programme are teachers, tutors, parents and Old Abingdonians as well as selected suppliers of career education, information, advice, and guidance.

Michael Triff serves as Head of Career Guidance, responsible for designing, delivering and evaluating the Career Guidance Programme. He is always interested to hear your views. Email: [careerguidance@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:careerguidance@abingdon.org.uk).

## Activities by Year Group

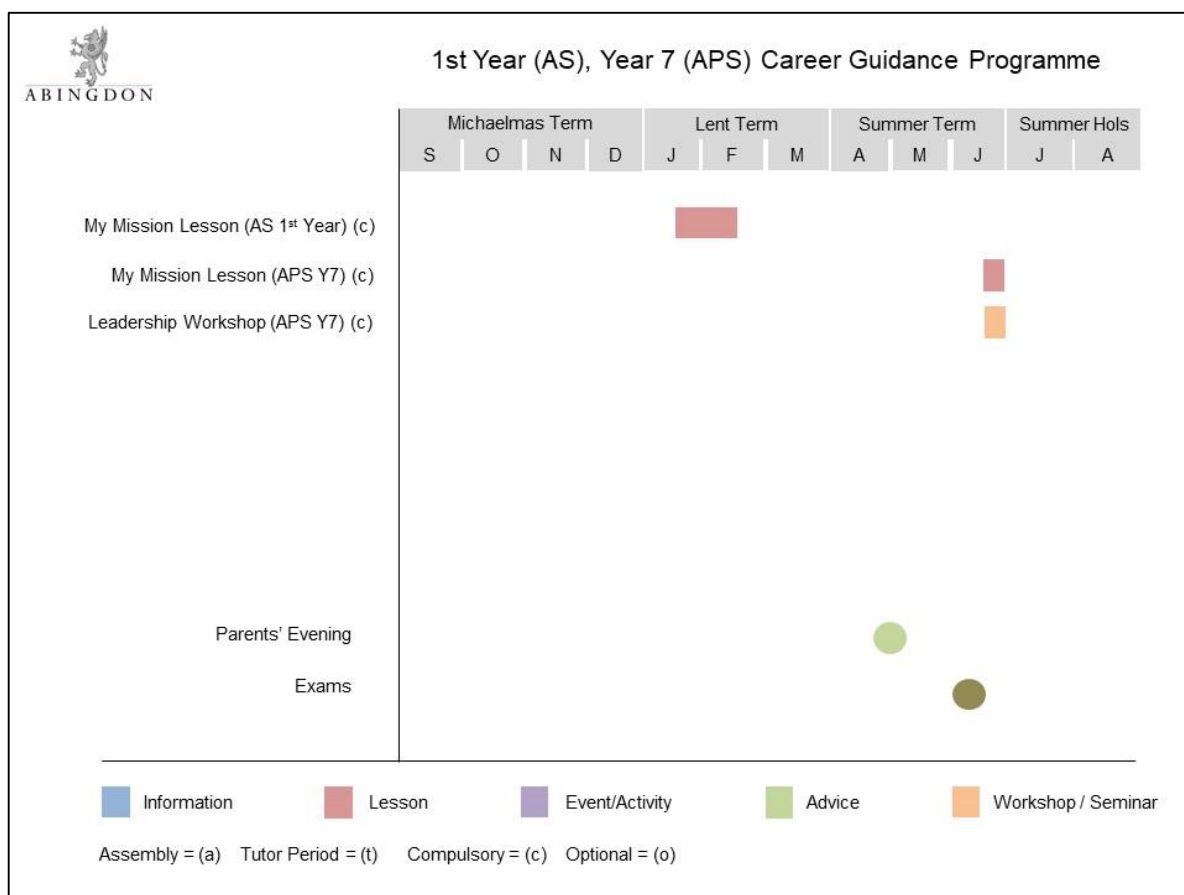
### 1st Year (Year 7, age 11-12, KS3, Lower School): 60-65 pupils

Career guidance is first introduced in 1st Year, but in a very indirect way.

In January/February, the Head of Career Guidance delivers a lesson with each tutor group called **'My Mission'** as part of the Lower School 'Be More Griffen' programme. Pupils learn about how things that have 'worth' to them shape their values, and how these values drive decisions they make about actions they take, in their personal life, work/school life and community. They come to understand, therefore, why different people (who have different values) make different decisions, including about career choices. In an activity, each pupil then selects his own top five values (from 50 possible choices) and writes a 'personal mission statement' drawing on these five values. Pupils can volunteer to read out their mission statement, revealing how their mission is similar to and different from that of other pupils, because of the different choices made about which values are most important to them.

The same lesson is delivered in June to Year 7 pupils at Abingdon Prep School.

Year 7 pupils at Abingdon Prep School also attend a workshop on Leadership. The workshop helps them to think about what is involved in the eight different Year 8 student leadership roles at APS, so they can decide if they wish to put themselves forward for appointment by teachers or election by their peers.



## 2nd Year (Year 8, age 12-13, KS3, Lower School): 60-65 pupils

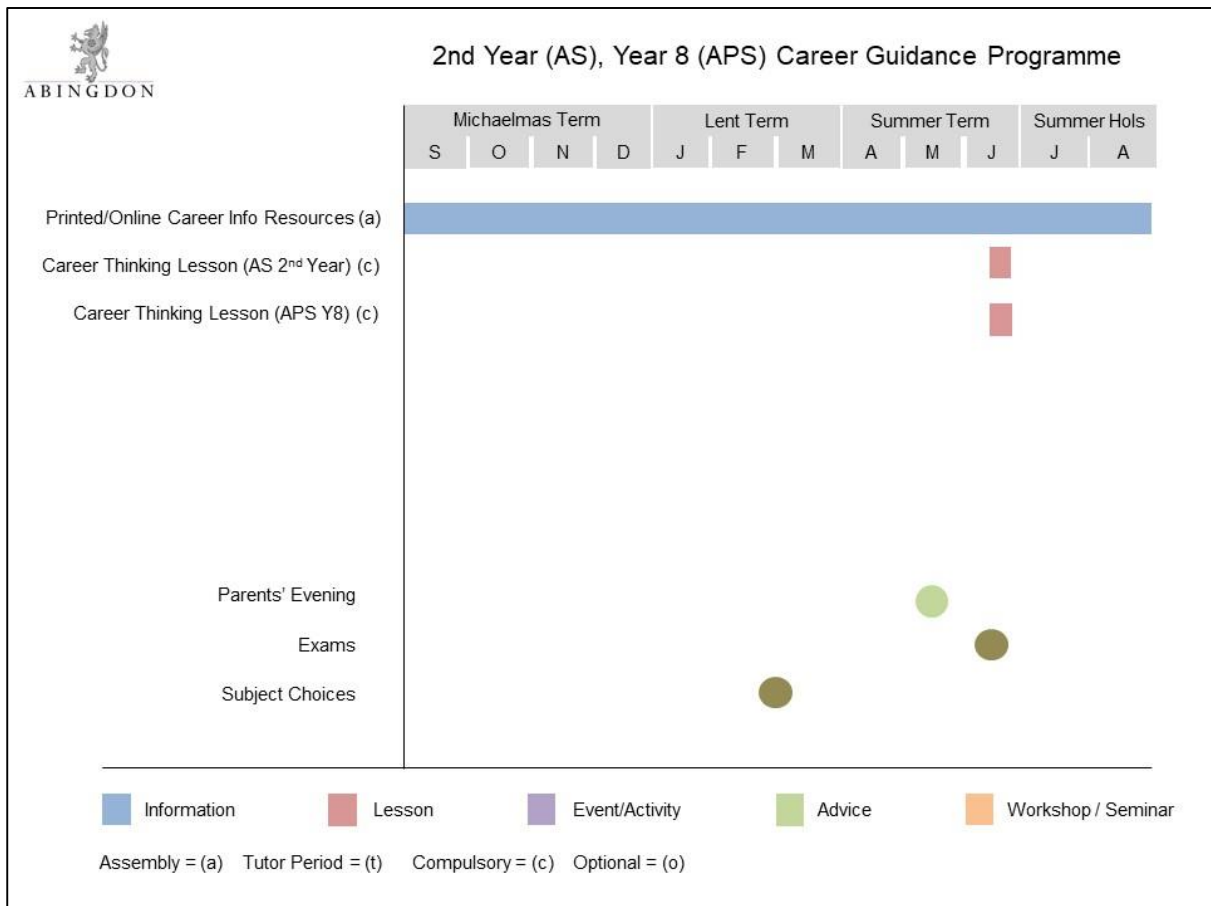
Career guidance continues in 2nd Year, with a light programme of activities.

In January, the Head of Career Guidance speaks at a Lower School Assembly to inform all pupils of the **career information resources** available on the pupil intranet (Firefly).

After 2nd Year exams are completed in June, the Head of Career Guidance delivers a lesson called '**Career Thinking**' to each 2nd Year tutor group. Through facilitated discussions and a range of group activities, pupils explore these six questions:

- What is a career?
- What does working and pursuing a career involve?
- What might a career look like over the course of one's working life?
- When does one start a career?
- What kinds of occupations are there?
- What's important to think about and do over the next 2-3 years (in Middle School)?

The same lesson is delivered in June to Year 8 pupils at Abingdon Prep School.



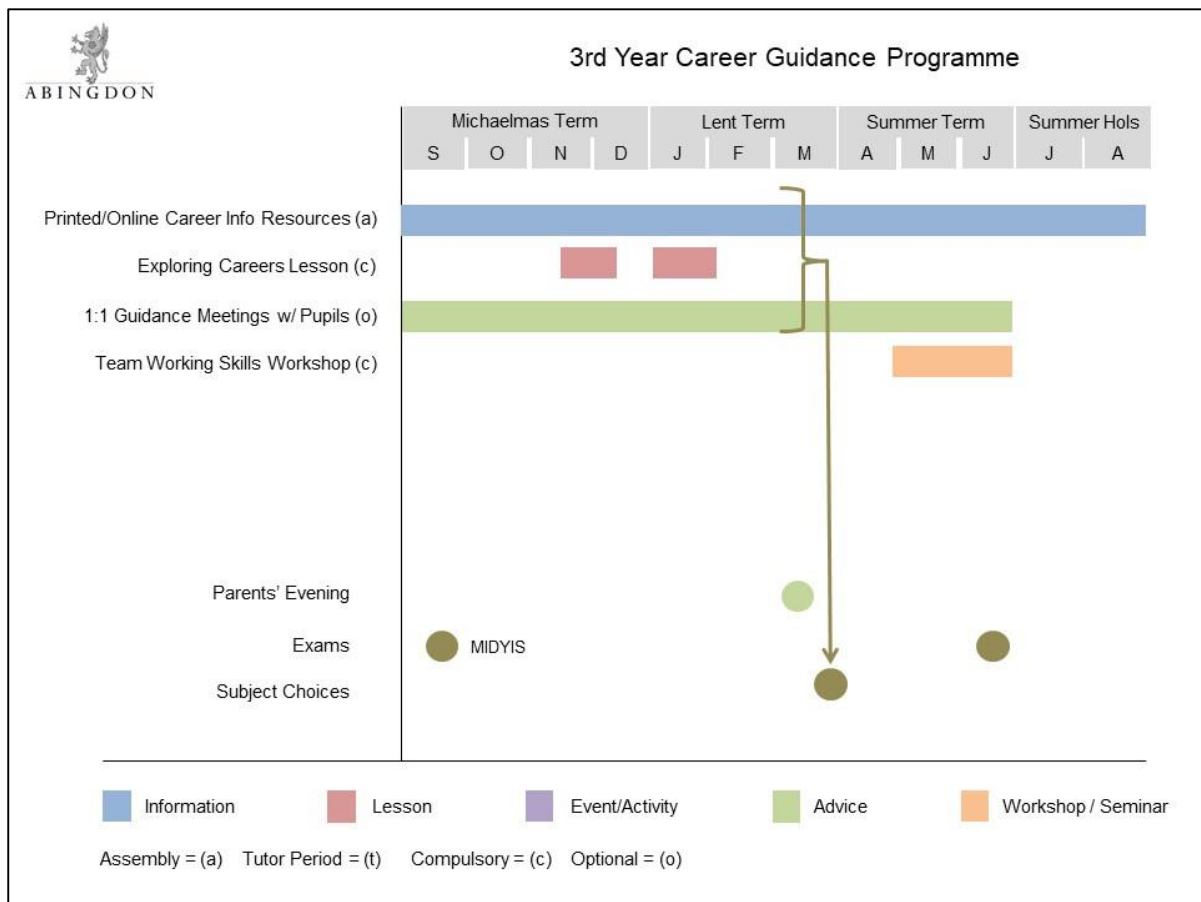
### 3rd Year (Year 9, age 13-14, KS3, Middle School): 190-195 pupils

Career guidance takes on more significance for the first time in 3rd Year, when Year groups reach their full size and cohorts are complete.

In September, the Head of Career Guidance speaks at 3rd Year Assembly to inform all new pupils (and remind all returning pupils) of the **career information resources** available on the pupil intranet (Firefly).

Starting after October half-term, every 3rd Year pupil attends an **'Exploring Careers'** lesson in which they get introduced to a 'Framework for Exploring Careers'. This framework gives pupils a structure for researching any given occupation in terms of what it offers (and does not offer) from six different dimensions (interests, abilities, motivations, lifestyle, personality, health). They learn how to use this six-point framework to create a 'personal recipe' for what is important to them in – what they want from – their career, and to then use that 'recipe' to assess different occupations for their suitability. A group activity engages pupils in applying the framework to nine different occupations, culminating in a quiz to test their knowledge and analytical skills. Equipped with this method, pupils can continue their own independent career research with a view to making career-informed GCSE subject choices in late February. They can also schedule **1:1 meetings** with the Head of Career Guidance.

Starting in late Lent Term, 3rd Year pupils receive training in **Team Working** skills, which become especially critical during GCSE Years.



#### 4th Year (Year 10, age 14-15, KS4, Middle School): 190-195 pupils

The focus of career guidance in 4th Year is to help pupils build additional GCSE-critical soft skills, clarify and refine potential career directions (in so far as is natural), and prepare for the following year's work experience programme.

In Michaelmas term, 4th Year pupils receive training in **Group Decision Making** skills, which are critical during GCSE Years, especially for academic group project work and various 'Other Half' activities and competitions.

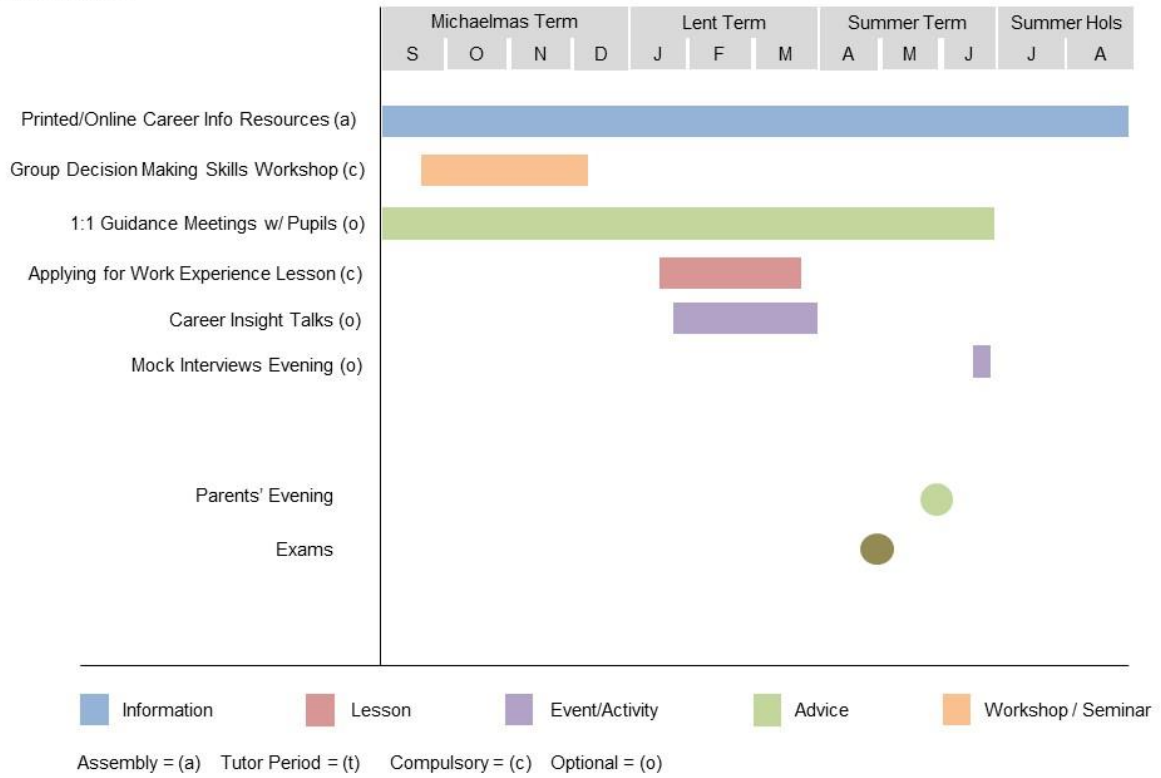
Throughout the year, 4th Year pupils continue to have access to the **career information resources** available on the pupil intranet (Firefly). They can also schedule **1:1 meetings** with the Head of Career Guidance.

In Lent Term, every 4th Year pupil attends an '**Applying for Work Experience**' lesson in which they learn how to write a CV and Cover Letter. Pupils can get feedback from the Head of Career Guidance on drafts of their CV and Cover Letter, which they will use to secure a work experience placement in 5th Year.

In late June, 4<sup>th</sup> year pupils are offered the opportunity to have practice interviews at a '**Mock Interviews Evening**'. This evening is most immediately useful for pupils looking for part-time or seasonal jobs once aged 16, and for work experience placements from 5<sup>th</sup> year onwards.

Several times a year, the Career Guidance Programme brings external speakers (often parents and alumni) to Abingdon School to host informal '**Career Insight Talks**'. These talks are designed to give 4th year, 5th year and 6th form pupils insights into what different industry sectors are like; highlight key personal qualities needed for success; explain the rewards and sacrifices of the job; describe different specialisms within the industry; and reveal the different educational routes into the industry. These talks are especially useful to pupils unsure of what career they might pursue. In every three-year cycle, nine different industry sectors are covered.

### 4th Year Career Guidance Programme



## 5th Year (Year 11, age 15-16, KS4, Middle School): 190-195 pupils

5th Year pupils have many opportunities to engage in Abingdon's Career Guidance Programme; 5th Year is a very important year in terms of choosing A-Level subjects and preparing for the 6th Form (or another Level 3 qualification), getting first-time experience of the world of work, and deepening an understanding of potential future careers.

Given that tentative A-Level subject choices are made in late November of 5th Year, early in Michaelmas term, pupils can participate in a '**Career Profiling Programme**' administered by an external organisation. Pupils first complete a series of online questionnaires about their interests, skills, lifestyle preferences, motivations, and personality. Based on the answers given, the online system generates a list of potential occupations that would appear to be well matched to the pupil along with key information that explains why. Pupils then have a one-to-one meeting with an independent and experienced career adviser to discuss the matched occupations, including implications on post-16 education options and A-Level subject choices. This service is offered for a fee on an opt-out basis.

5th Year pupils continue to have access to the **career information resources** available on the pupil intranet (Firefly). For pupils interested in discussing further the findings of their career profiling programme, and post-16 education options (including A-Level subject choices), the Head of Career Guidance is available for follow-up **1:1 Meetings**.

Kicking off at the beginning of the year, and continuing in stages throughout, is a 5th Year **Work Experience Scheme**, strongly encouraged for all 5th Year pupils. Pupils are charged with finding their own placement and undertaking the placement for one or two weeks immediately after completion of their GCSE exams in Summer Term.

The annual **Abingdon Career Convention**, jointly run by Abingdon, St Helen's, and Our Lady's, is held in mid-March and features parents and alumni of all three schools, as well as local employers, representing a wide range of careers. Pupils can meet with representatives one to one, participate in small group discussions, and attend panel presentations. The event is compulsory for 5th Year pupils.

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Finally, 5th Year pupils continue to receive skills training, this year during Michaelmas term and covering **Project Planning** skills, which will be critical during their A-Level years and beyond.





## L6 (Year 12, age 16-17, Upper School): 170-185 pupils

L6 is another busy year for Abingdon's Career Guidance Programme, which helps pupils begin to think about 'what comes next' after leaving Abingdon, 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 information 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 summer **Work Experience Scheme**, this one for L6 pupils. Alumni are recruited to host high quality, one to two-week work experience placements over the summer holidays between L6 and U6.

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 after leaving school, Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine jointly run a **GAP Year Advice Evening** in January. The event includes a presentation on all the considerations involved in electing, planning, and managing a Gap Year, as well as specialist advice on Gap Year travel projects, and is followed by a panel discussion with alumni/ae (from both schools) who took Gap Years.

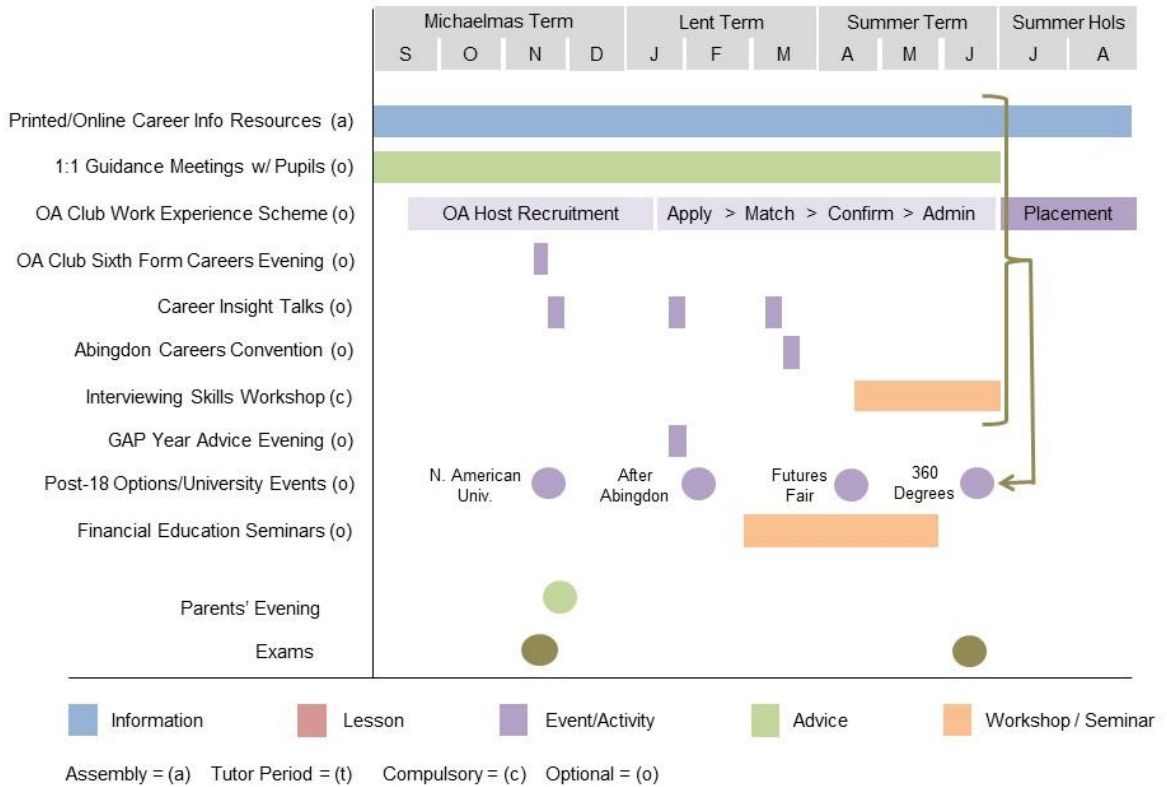
L6 pupils receive training in **Interviewing** skills during Summer Term and can subsequently book a 1:1 meeting with the Head of Career Guidance to get further help and practice with their interviewing technique. Interviewing skills will be immediately useful in terms of applying for leadership roles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

The 6th 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 income tax. Seminars are open to all L6 and U6 students on an optional, walk-in basis, and are held on five Monday afternoons in the second half of Lent and first half of Summer terms.

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

### L6 Career Guidance Programme

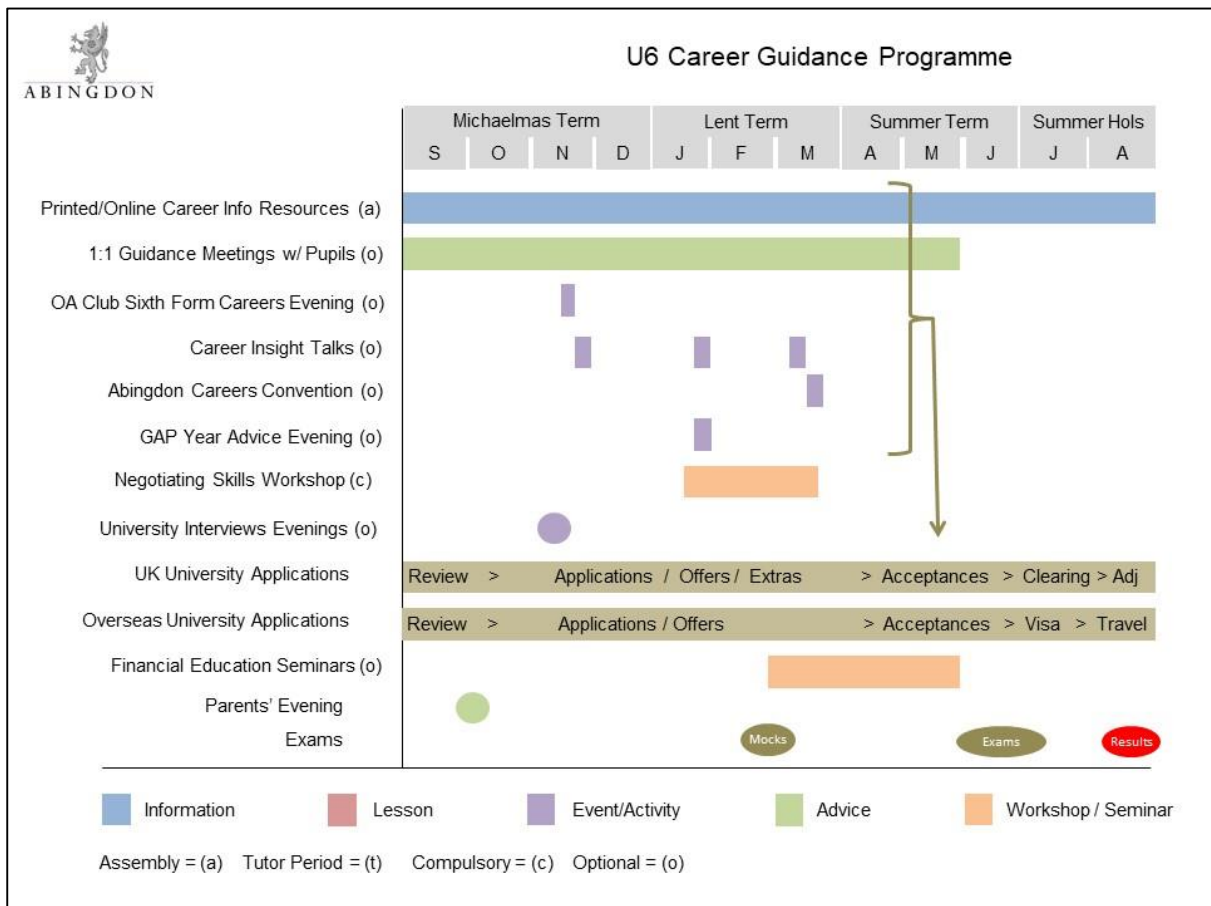


## U6 (Year 13, age 17-18, Upper School): 170-185 pupils

All of the activities offered in L6 are also open to U6 pupils including:

- **Career research resources** (on Firefly)
- **1:1 Guidance Meetings** (Careers, HE, Alternatives to HE, Gap Year)
- **OA Club Sixth Form Careers Evening** in November
- **GAP Year Advice Evening** in January
- **Abingdon Careers Convention** in mid-March
- **Career Insight Talks** in Lent Term
- **Financial Education Seminars** in March/April

The last and final soft skills training is for U6 pupils on **Negotiation** skills and is run during Lent Term.



## Other Careers Provision

The Head of Career Guidance:

- maintains a comprehensive section of the pupil intranet (Firefly) for career information resources. This facility is available to all pupils and is continuously being expanded and enhanced, including publications, sign posting to the latest and best web sites, and creating bespoke resources for Abingdon pupils.
- maintains information on each pupil's 5th Year career profiling programme findings as well as guidance given and conclusions reached, available upon request to teachers/tutors who are advising them on GCSE, A-Level, and HE courses.
- helps teachers link learning in lessons to knowledge/skills needed for certain careers ('curricular career connections'); keeps teachers up-to-date on the latest developments in post-16 and post-18 options and Gap Years; and suggests and helps to coordinate career-related trips led by teachers for pupils.
- attends all parent evenings for 4<sup>th</sup> Year to U6 (and is also available for consultation at other times).
- signposts pupils of the appropriate age to opportunities within and outside School to gain experiences and qualifications and develop skills that help make them more attractive to universities and employers in the future.
- coordinates termly visits by British Armed Forces Career Advisers (Army, Navy/Marines and RAF) to meet with 4th Year to U6 pupils interested in a career in the military.
- upon request, helps to put pupils in touch with relevant leavers (Old Abingdonians) to ask questions about specific careers and educational routes into careers.

## Parental Support for Career Thinking

Research suggests that the biggest influence on a pupil's career thinking comes from his/her parents. Parents can support their son's career thinking in several ways:

- Engage your son in informal conversation (at the right time and place!) about what he enjoys doing, what he is (or could become) good at, and what gives him personal satisfaction and reward. Ask him questions that facilitate self-exploration of his thoughts and self-confidence in his ideas.
- Remind him that there are many different occupations from which to choose (including many on the 'road less travelled by') and excellent school resources available to research them. Suggest he keep as broad a view as possible of career options and not narrow prematurely.

- Encourage and enable him to pursue his ambitions, even if you don't share his enthusiasm.
- Take him to your workplace, talk to him about what you do now and what your career path has looked like, and identify the knowledge and skills you have used along the way so he gets a sense of what the world of work is like, understands how careers evolve, and realises that he will need to prepare for a career, whatever he does.
- Present career decisions you made as entirely bespoke to you and your situation at the time, being careful not to fall into the trap of justifying one's own career decisions or recruiting for one's own profession.
- Urge him to attend career events, fairs and talks at school and to undertake work experience regardless of whether or not the placement is in an area of career interest. If necessary, use your contacts to help him (but let him struggle to find his own placement before you intervene!)
- Support his participation in a range of extra-curricular activities, in and out of school, through which he can build a whole host of capabilities valuable in a career and life.
- Suggest he makes an appointment with the Head of Career Guidance to discuss education and career planning.
- And, finally, make sure that any advice you offer is current and not based on the way things were when you were at school, university or starting a career!