



ABINGDON

THE SIXTH FORM
September 2024

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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 2024. It contains general advice as well as specific information for each subject.

2. QUALIFICATION FOR THE SIXTH FORM

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. 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.

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 from other schools will be asked at interview about the A level subjects they wish to study. See http://www.abingdon.org.uk/sixth_form_admission/

Bursaries which provide financial assistance, are available to those boys whose parents could not otherwise afford the fees. For further information please see <http://www.abingdon.org.uk/bursaries/> or contact the Admissions department.

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. Students 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.

More information regarding these scholarships is available from the School website http://www.abingdon.org.uk/sixth_form_scholarships/ or from the Admissions department.

Arkwright scholarships could be available for pupils who are considering a career in the field of Product Design or Engineering. These external scholarships, offered by the Smallpeice Trust, are intended to reward candidates with an aptitude for Design and Technology, Physics and Maths at sixth form level. 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). Deadline for application for the Arkwright Scholarship is before the end of Michaelmas term.

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 study four main A levels, one in each of the blocks in the timetable. This typically occupies forty lessons a fortnight. Additionally, pupils 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. Pupils also have supervised private study periods and take part in at least two sport sessions each week.

3 or 4 A Level Subjects	Other Half / Sport
Supervised Study Periods	
Tutor Period, Mindsets/Enrichment	
Optional EPQ	Optional Courses: e.g Language GCSE, Creative Writing etc.

7. SUBJECT PREFERENCES

Pupils let me know their *final* preferences via a Google Form in February. Following that, a blocking system will be constructed to suit as many pupils as possible. Most subject combinations are possible though there are a few restrictions:

- We **do not** allow pupils to study both Religious Studies and Philosophy.
- Pupils may choose **either** Mathematics **or** Further Mathematics, but not both.
- Pupils **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, pupils 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. 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. Students 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 2024, 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.

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.

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

9. 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 Hoddinott and Mr Ambrose) 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, Head of 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.

10. 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 post-16 and 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 for L6 pupils. 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.

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. 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.

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)

11. 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.

12. SUBJECT INFORMATION

EXAM BOARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>A Level Board and Specification</u>
Ancient History	OCR Classics: Ancient History (H407)
Art	Edexcel Fine Art (9AD0)
Biology	AQA Biology (7402)
Business	Edexcel Business (9BS0)
Chemistry	Edexcel Chemistry (9CH0)
Computer Science	AQA Computer Science (7517)
Design and Technology	AQA Design & Technology (Product Design) (7552)
Drama and Theatre	Edexcel Drama and Theatre (9DR0)
Economics	Edexcel Economics (9EC0)
English Literature	OCR English Literature (H472)
EPQ	AQA Level 3 Extended Project Qualification (7993)
Further Mathematics	Edexcel Further Mathematics (9FM0)
French	AQA French (7652)
Geography	OCR Geography (H481)
German	AQA German (7662)
Greek	OCR Classical Greek (H444)
History	OCR History (H505)
Latin	OCR Latin A Level (H443)
Mathematics	Edexcel Mathematics (9MA0)
Music	OCR Music (H543)
Philosophy	AQA Philosophy (2172)
Physics	Edexcel Physics (9PH0)
Politics	AQA Politics (7152)
Psychology	AQA Psychology (7182)
Religious Studies	OCR Religious Studies (H573)
Spanish	AQA Spanish (7692)

ANCIENT HISTORY

OCR Classics: Ancient History (H407)

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

The Greek and Roman halves of the course carry an equal weighting of 50%, and we split both the Lower and Upper Sixth equally between Greek and Roman History.

In the Lower Sixth, the Greek side of the course 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. On the Roman side we study the establishment by Augustus of a military dictatorship and its evolution under the other Julio-Claudian emperors, such as Caligula and Nero.

In the Upper Sixth, 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, while 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 A-level exam includes a mixture of essays and evaluations of both ancient sources and modern interpretations.

It is important to realise that no prior knowledge of the ancient world is expected. You do not need to have studied the GCSE in Ancient History, but the topics do link up well with some of the topics at GCSE.

ART

[Edexcel/Pearson GCE in Fine Art \(9AD0\)](#)

The study of Fine Art at A Level will develop intellectual, imaginative, creative and intuitive capabilities. The course will follow the 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

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.

BIOLOGY

[AQA Biology \(7402\)](#)

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. Biology is a good choice of subject for people who want a career in ecology, conservation, research and clinical professions, as well as many other scientific and analytical careers. Studying Chemistry with Biology in the sixth form probably opens up a greater range of university courses, but it is not essential. Outside of normal lessons we organise a number of guest speakers, revision sessions, extension sessions and sessions to help prepare for medical applications. There is often an opportunity to join a major overseas expedition.

Biology at Abingdon follows the AQA A Level course that consists of 8 units, split over two years. During the lower sixth pupils study Units 1-4, taught between two teachers and in the Upper Sixth they study Units 5-8. 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. There are a minimum number of required practical activities set by the examination board: the principles behind these practical activities will be tested as part of their written examination papers. 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 a Field Studies Centre in September of the Upper Sixth. The provisional cost for this trip is approximately £350.

BUSINESS

[Edexcel A Level Business \(9BS0\)](#)

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, for more information and exam guidance click [here](#) , and is split into four key themes, covering:

Theme 1 Marketing and People including motivation, theory and entrepreneurship.

Theme 2 – Managing business activities including finance, management and legislation.

Theme 3 – Business decisions and strategy including investment appraisal.

Theme 4 – Global business including the operations of multinational corporations.

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. Griffenomics is a pupil-led business magazine and the department also provides opportunities to meet CEO's and visit local firms

A Level Business requires a reasonable level of numeracy 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.

CHEMISTRY

[Edexcel A level Chemistry \(9CH0\)](#)

The Chemistry A level covers all of the essential aspects of inorganic, organic and physical chemistry to provide an intellectually stimulating course that underpins later study of the subject and other related fields. 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.

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 on to looking in detail at important areas such as transition metal chemistry, carbonyl chemistry, entropy and acid-base chemistry.

The A level course is ideally suited to students who enjoyed and performed strongly in the middle school and who are looking forward to really developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject. There is an element of mathematical content and a strong mathematical background would be desirable for students wanting to take this course.

CLASSICAL LANGUAGES: Latin and Greek

[A Level - Latin - OCR H443](#)

[A Level - Classical Greek - H444](#)

Latin and Greek are separate subjects but the pattern of the courses for Latin and Greek is identical; 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%. While the subjects can be studied separately, they work particularly well 'playing off' one another when studied together. 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. These courses will offer plenty of opportunity to read beyond the syllabus, particularly in the Lower Sixth where prior to beginning the exam set-texts in the Summer Term, three other authors are read and discussed; 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.

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, and the skills gained are appreciated in a wide range of careers, beyond the ones traditionally associated with Classical subjects. You will need to have studied GCSE Latin to study A Level Latin, and GCSE Greek to study A Level Greek.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

[AQA Computer Science \(A-level 7517\)](#)

Whatever your academic direction, you use computers to look at information 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.

A Level computer science covers both practical (programming approx. 60%) and theoretical (approx. 40%) aspects of computing. In the Lower Sixth you gain a really good grasp of the Python programming language. Fifty hours of Upper Sixth class time will be allocated to an individual programming project. The options are many - 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 done CS GCSE helps you start the course quickly 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 a grade 8 in GCSE Mathematics or equivalent. Students will need their own laptop computer (Windows/Mac/Linux i.e. **not** a Chromebook).

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

[AQA Design & Technology \(Product Design\) \(A-level 7552\)](#)

The Design and Technology A-Level specification is a forward thinking 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.

The A-level course is made up of an NEA unit (50% weighting) and two written papers (50% weighting)

The course, although heavily biased towards practical development, 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.

DRAMA AND THEATRE

[Edexcel GCE in Drama and Theatre \(9DR0\)](#)

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.

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.

ECONOMICS

[Edexcel Economics A Level \(9EC0\)](#)

Economics is an academically rigorous A-level that explores issues of contemporary relevance such as: labour shortages, climate change, the impact of multinationals, government economic policy, inequality and globalisation.

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.

Teaching in Economics classes is varied and engaging and in some sets there is a mix of Abingdon and St Helen's pupils. Lessons are taught in the Faringdon building and will typically include presentations, pair and group work, case studies, videos, research tasks, computer based activities and class discussions. Griffenomics is a 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".

ENGLISH LITERATURE

[OCR GCE in English Literature A Level \(H472\)](#)

English Literature is the study of novels, plays and poetry and their social, political and historical context. Like other humanities subjects, it provides opportunities to debate the big questions that have dominated intellectual discourse for centuries. The Lower Sixth course is focused on two equally-weighted exam units, with coursework (Non-Examined Assessment) tasks following in the Upper Sixth.

Component	Details
1: Drama & Poetry Pre-1900 <i>Exam: 2 hrs 30 mins</i> 40% of A Level	<u>Section A:</u> Two essay questions on <i>Hamlet</i> by Shakespeare (20% of A Level) <u>Section B:</u> One comparative essay question on <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> by John Webster & <i>Paradise Lost</i> by John Milton (20% of A Level)
2: American Literature 1880-1940 <i>Exam: 2 hrs 30 mins</i> 40% of A Level	<u>Section A:</u> One essay question on an unseen extract from American Literature 1880-1940 (20% of A Level) <u>Section B:</u> One comparative essay question on two American novels from 1880-1940 (e.g. <i>The Great Gatsby</i> by F. Scott Fitzgerald & <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>)

	by John Steinbeck) (20% of A Level)
3: Non-Examined Assessment <i>Coursework</i> 20% of A Level	<u>Task 1</u> : One close-reading essay on the poetry of W.B. Yeats (7.5% of A Level) <u>Task 2</u> : One comparative essay on a novel & play from the 20th/21st century (12.5% of A Level)

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION (EPQ)

[AQA Level 3 Extended Project Qualification \(7993\)](#)

We encourage most A Level students to consider the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Worth half an A Level (28 UCAS points), the EPQ is the ideal qualification to supplement subject-based A Levels. It helps students enhance UCAS applications, develop the mindset, skills and habits that will bridge the gap between Sixth Form and university and either deepen their knowledge of an academic topic or pursue a more vocational interest.

Students choose their own topic or question; translate their topic or question into a research-led project proposal; develop and realise their project; make a presentation on their research; and carry out a post-project evaluation. Half of the marks available rest on the quality of the final product; the other half are awarded on the basis of the project log, which candidates use to chart and reflect on the development of the project.

The EPQ has the potential to significantly enhance UCAS applications. More than half of the elite Russell Group Universities state that applicants studying for an EPQ are more likely to receive an offer than those that don't; this is of increasing significance as more schools offer and promote the qualification. Around half of the Russell Group Universities are likely to offer lower grade requirements to students studying for an EPQ, contingent on the student receiving an A or A*. Employers also look favourably on the EPQ as evidence of important transferable skills, initiative, commitment and grit. Above all, the EPQ helps develop the skills vital for independent learning, including critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving.

Inspiration for a project can come from almost anywhere, whether a topic touched on in a class or something entirely personal and unrelated to academic studies. Potential project outcomes are: a 5,000-word report on secondary research, a report on primary research, a physical artefact (creative or technological) and / or a production (for example, a short film). Projects at Abingdon have included an essay evaluating Napoleon's military prowess; an investigation into the green credentials of electric cars; making and testing a model rocket; a translation of a short story from Hebrew into English; an evaluation of the CIA; a skateboard and a short film inspired by post-WWII Japanese cinema. While half of the marks available rest on the quality of the final product, half are awarded on the basis of the project log, which students use to detail the development of the project. Students are supported by a rigorous programme of taught skills, including planning, research, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, report-writing and presentation, plus regular meetings with a supervisor.

The EPQ at Abingdon is accredited by AQA. Students register for the qualification in the Lower Sixth, at the end of the Michaelmas term, and receive research training and guidance as they work on their projects over the course of the Lent and Summer terms. They hand in a draft of their

final product at the start of the Upper Sixth, and submit completed projects by the end of the Michaelmas term.

GEOGRAPHY

[OCR GCE in Geography \(OCR H481\)](#)

Geography is a dynamic subject, constantly evolving with academic research and global change. The Department stays abreast of contemporary geographies and has high expectations of pupils in covering a rigorous programme of study. The course examines a range of world issues including; environmental responsibility, global interdependence, cultural understanding and tolerance, commerce, trade and industry, and population and disease.

The linear qualification consists of three examination papers and an Independent Investigation (including a residential field trip). It is a popular option in the sixth form and many choose to read Geography or a related degree course at leading universities. As a social science, Geography can be studied in combination with most subjects, developing quantitative skills and deepening scientific understanding, as well as persuasive writing and argumentative ability. Geographical Association lectures are attended regularly in Oxford and pupils also take part in external competitions to broaden their engagement with the subject.

HISTORY

[OCR History A – H505](#)

Each student will study four modules over two years (British and non-British Period studies with one teacher and a 200 year thematic 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. We are heavily subscribed, with between 40-60 pupils choosing A Level history each year.

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 thematic paper with another. There are a number of topics.

- British Period Study topics will include: The **Tudors and the Stuarts - unit 1**
- The non-British paper will include the **French Revolution and Napoleon, and the American Revolution - unit 2**
- The themes paper sees pupils study **China and its rulers, 1839 to 1989 - unit 3**
- The **NEA 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 - **unit 4**

Students will be tested on source-skills, interpretations and essay writing in the A2 exams. All modules will require reading around the class topics and pupils should be prepared for this.

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. Recent speakers include: Michael Lynch, Peter Frankopan, Catherine Holmes, Lars Laamann, Michael Broers, Gordon Barrett, Richard Rampton KC, Dr Helen Carr, Neil Sanghvi, Nicholas Kinloch, Jeremy Black, Steven Gunn and many more.

They have covered topics from Holocaust denial, towards a global Middle Ages, Napoleon, Henry VII and Henry VIII, The Opium Wars, The Cultural Revolution in China, the rise of the Nazis, the American Revolutionary Wars, Siege Warfare and more.

We run an A Level History trip to Paris for pupils studying the French Revolution and Napoleon.

MATHEMATICS

[Edexcel Mathematics \(9MA0\)](#)

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.

The A level course builds upon GCSE knowledge including Algebra - especially Quadratics, linear equations, simultaneous equations and $y = mx + c$, Indices and surds and Trigonometry. All content is compulsory for the A level Maths course and there are three 2 hour exams at the end of the course. You will study:

Pure Mathematics (66%) - proof, algebra, trigonometry, calculus and vectors

Statistics (17%) - statistical sampling, data representation and probability

Mechanics (17%) - modelling the motion of objects and forces acting on them

The Casio Classwiz 991CW is recommended.

Lessons are a mixture of learning new ideas/techniques and an opportunity to develop applying this new knowledge to problem solving and modelling real world situations. Understanding in mathematics often takes time to develop, so students need to be willing to persevere and ready to practise techniques which in turn will enable them to communicate their mathematical thoughts clearly and concisely with each other. Success at A level is dependent on a good understanding of the concepts studied, fluency in algebra is very important as is a general enthusiasm to tackle mathematical problems. You must also really like Maths!

Further Maths

[Edexcel Further Mathematics 9FM0](#)

Further Maths is designed to stretch and challenge able mathematicians and prepare them for university courses in Mathematics and related quantitative and scientific subjects. 50% of the content is Pure Maths and students choose two options from Further Mechanics 1, Further Mechanics 2, Further Statistics 1 and Decision Maths 1 to make up the other 50%.

There are 4 exam papers, each 90 minutes long and 75 marks at the end of the U6th.

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.

MODERN LANGUAGES: French, German and Spanish

AQA A Level in Modern Foreign Languages

[A Level French 7652](#)

[A Level German 7662](#)

[A Level Spanish 7692](#)

An A Level 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 A Level 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 a number of ways. You will be able to travel around French, German and Spanish speaking countries, talking to native speakers 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, an A Level in French, German or Spanish is a distinct bonus. In addition, you will be able to read articles and novels in a foreign language and understand foreign films in the original version. 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 former Abingdon and SHSK linguists can be viewed by Abingdon students here: <https://abingdon.fireflycloud.net/career-guidance/careers-and-foreign-languages>.

Topic areas that will be discussed both from a specifically French/ German/ Spanish context include the following (NB this is not exhaustive):

- Contemporary music and cinema
- Art and architecture
- Immigration, integration and racism
- Festivals and traditions
- Politics and young people

In addition to these and other topics, you will study one film and one literary text and will prepare an independent research project on an area of your own personal interest.

The teaching week is divided between two teachers. You will learn about the language in more depth, broaden your vocabulary and improve your understanding of grammar. As well as learning about the culture and history of the target language country, you will engage with real media (podcasts / news clips / press articles) and discuss issues in the language during one-to-one lessons with a language assistant. You will be encouraged to visit France, Germany or Spain, either by your own arrangement or through the department's study trips. In addition to these 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 three papers:

1. Listening, Reading and Writing
2. Writing
3. Speaking

An A Level qualification in a foreign language can lead to many different paths at university. You

can take a traditional modern languages degree, either single or joint honours. You might opt to take an *ab initio* language (e.g. Arabic), or combine a language with any other discipline, 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 A 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 in greater depth.

MUSIC

[OCR MUSIC A Level \(H543\)](#)

The varied nature of Music A level, comprising performing, composing and the academic study of music make it a particularly highly regarded academic qualification. Music A level offers the opportunity to understand the great questions facing society through a musical lens and, in small friendly teaching sets, to enjoy some of the greatest music ever composed.

There are two pathways to the OCR Music A level: a performance-heavy path and a composition-heavy path. Abingdon pupils are invariably excellent performers so commonly opt for the former (35%), involving a filmed performance recital (10-15 minutes), two compositions totalling 4 minutes (25%) and a listening and appraising written examination (40%). The Performing element is prepared with an instrumental/vocal teacher. All potential candidates should sing or play an instrument to at least grade 7 level and be willing to take an active part in the school's music making in both choral and instrumental fields. In Composition candidates will encounter advanced compositional techniques including more sophisticated phrase structures and textures, building on GCSE. The Listening and Appraising unit covers four areas of study – two are compulsory (18C Instrumental/20C Jazz) and two chosen from four (Programme Music/20C Innovations).

The department's full programme of concerts and wide range of ensembles and choirs offer essential experience, together with concert/opera trips and competitions/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. It combines well with Humanities and Languages and can act as a complementary subject for Maths and Science, as well as Law, Classics, Economics. Over the years, we have had a mix of students who have gone on to study music at university. A music degree can lead to a wide range of careers both within the arts and outside it - including law, accountancy, software engineering, teaching and performing. Employers in a range of fields value the discipline, the analytical presentational/communication skills that come as part of studying music at a higher level.

PHYSICS

[Edexcel Physics A Level \(9PH0\)](#)

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 IGCSE to study forces and motion in 2 dimensions, with a particular emphasis 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 introduces superposition and interference, before we enter the bizarre world of quantum mechanics.

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 cosmology. Practical skills are integral to the course; certain practicals must be completed and these, alongside the skills, are assessed in the final synoptic paper.

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 grade 7 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 is strongly recommended alongside A-level physics, as university courses in physics and engineering will usually expect Mathematics A-level as well.

The department offers regular extension lectures on aspects of physics and engineering such as particle accelerators and special relativity as well as an optional annual residential trip to CERN in Geneva.

PHILOSOPHY

[AQA GCE Philosophy 2172](#)

Philosophy is possibly the oldest subject that has ever been studied and for good reason. It is an academically rigorous subject that will appeal to any student with an interest in existential questions and in thinking at a more subtle level about the nature of reality. Philosophy enables students to develop a detailed academic approach to their studies, how to think critically and to confidently construct logical arguments, both orally and on paper. Therefore it is relevant and useful for nearly all academic disciplines from the humanities and PPE to science or medicine.

The course covers four areas:

Epistemology - What can we know and how do we know it? Can I know other people have minds, can I know the past existed?

Moral Philosophy - What if anything is morally right or wrong? Does anything have value? Does morality actually exist and if it does who or what decides what is good or bad?

Metaphysics of Mind - What is the mind, is it purely physical or something more? How do we have free will if everything must follow the laws of physics?

Metaphysics of God - Are there any successful arguments for the existence of God either based in logic or experience? Can God create a rock too heavy for him to lift? Why does evil exist?

The Philosophy and Theology Department offers both Religious Studies and Philosophy. Students cannot choose both.

POLITICS

[AQA 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 they discuss a range of domestic and international political issues. We also encourage our students to enter essay competitions and offer preparation sessions for Oxbridge interviews. We offer a trip to Washington and New York 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.

PSYCHOLOGY

[AQA A Level Psychology \(7182\)](#)

As a thriving 6th form subject Psychology is relevant to all areas of life. Essentially it is the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour, encompassing the key elements such as hypothesis testing but also allows a deeper level of philosophical debate, such as questioning whether humans ever actually have free will! Diversity is fundamental, including investigations of social interactions, unconscious forces in psychoanalysis, through to the inner workings of the brain.

Psychology is an accessible and inherently interesting subject which is challenging and promotes discussions within the course such as 'is deceit ever justifiable?' or 'how reliable is the diagnosis of mental illness?'

The transferable skills gained from studying psychology are excellent preparation for university and work as the topics encourage topical debate; for example the effect of psychology on the economy, ethical considerations of research and real life application to the treatment of mental health.

A benefit of Psychology A level is that it works alongside any other subjects, those more science focused have an opportunity to develop their critical writing skills, whereas those with a more arts based focus can still gain a scientific qualification but explore their flexibility of thinking through analysis of psychological concepts.

For more information on the specific topics studied within the A level course, please visit:

[Psychology | St Helen and St Katharine \(shsk.org.uk\)](https://shsk.org.uk)

RELIGIOUS STUDIES: Philosophy and Ethics

[OCR GCE Religious Studies: H573](#)

Religious Studies is an opportunity to ask big existential questions and can be studied by anyone with an enquiring mind. The course requires no specific religious commitment. RS enables students to develop their critical analysis, logical argument, debating skills and understanding of both ethical and philosophical concepts. The wide range between subtle philosophical ideas and real life application provides a challenging and practical A level.

The course covers three areas:

Philosophy of Religion - A study of Plato and Aristotle, can we talk meaningfully of God? What is a religious experience? Does God exist and if so, why does evil?

Religion and Ethics - Is there a correct ethical theory? If so, is it Natural Law, Kant or Utilitarianism? How do we apply these theories to real life situations such as Euthanasia, the environment, sexual ethics and business ethics?

Developments of Religious Thought - What is human nature and how does it relate to God? Who was Jesus as a person? Is there a life after death?

The Philosophy and Theology Department offers both Religious Studies and Philosophy. Students cannot choose both.