



# 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 helps students through career thinking and planning lessons supported by printed and online career information resources; career psychometric testing and one-to-one career guidance meetings, employability skills workshops; CV, cover letter and interview training and practice; financial education tutorials; and a wide range of events and activities, including talks and classroom lessons with working professionals, an annual careers fair, several career advice evenings, 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 websites 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 students 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, and selected suppliers of career education, information, advice, and guidance as well as parents and Old Abingdonians.

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

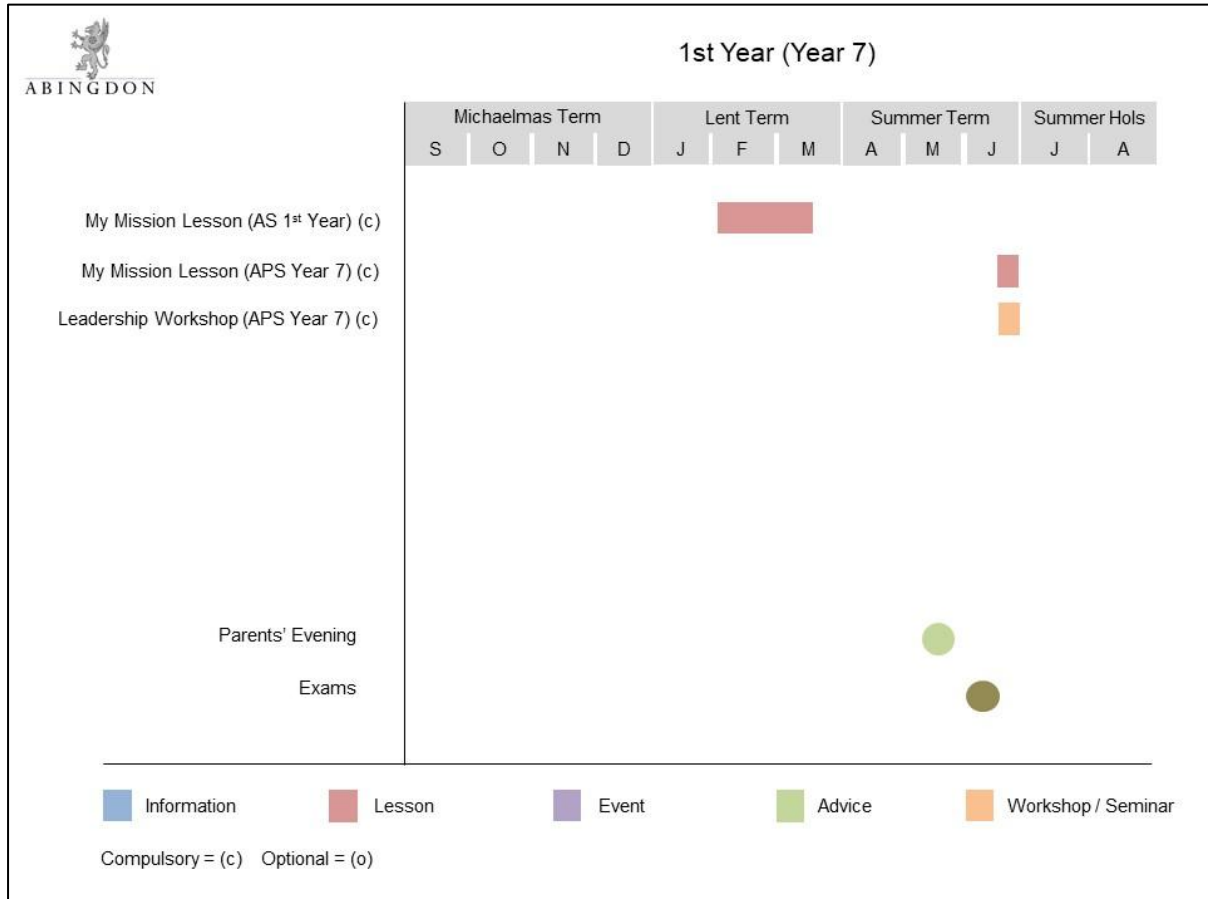
### 1st Year (Year 7, age 11-12, KS3, Lower School)

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

In February/March, 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.



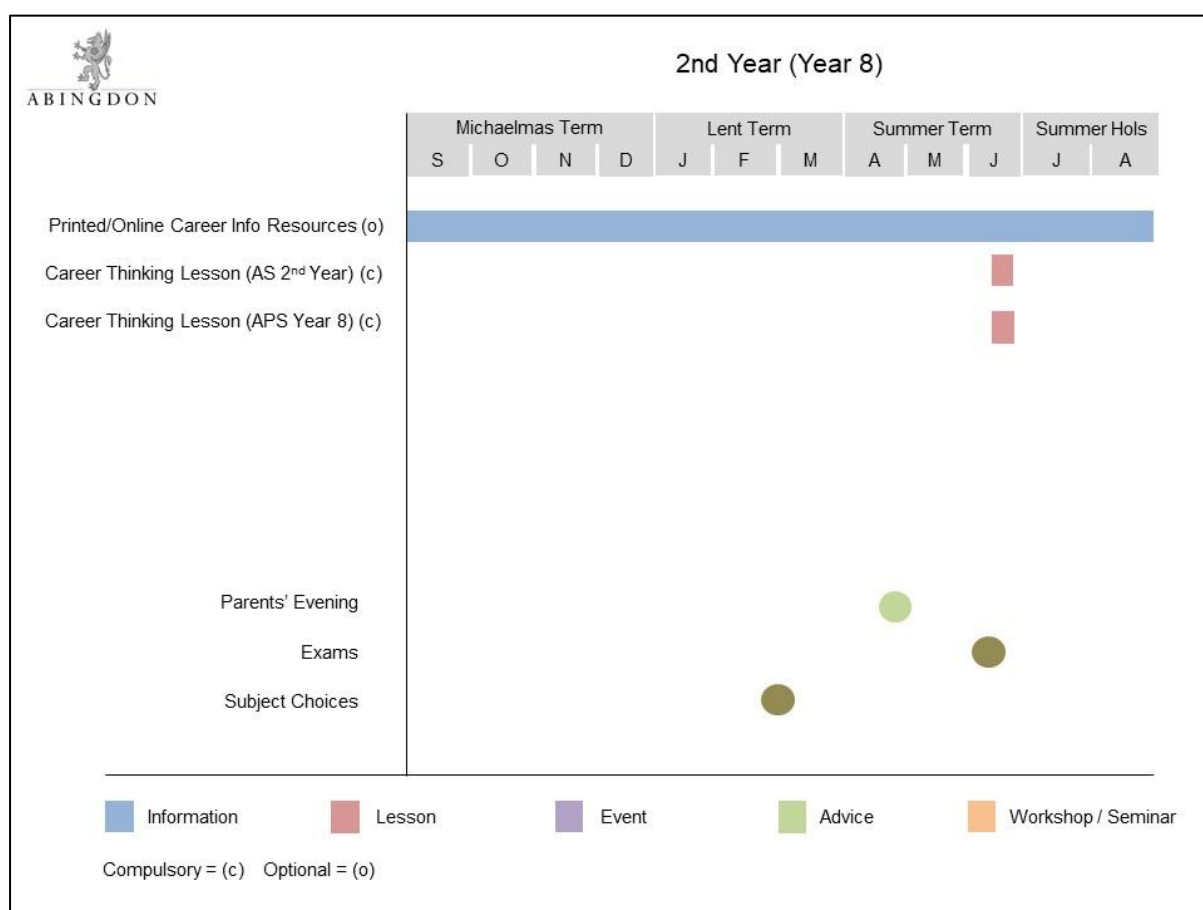
## 2nd Year (Year 8, age 12-13, KS3, Lower School)

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

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 the difference between a job, occupation and 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)?

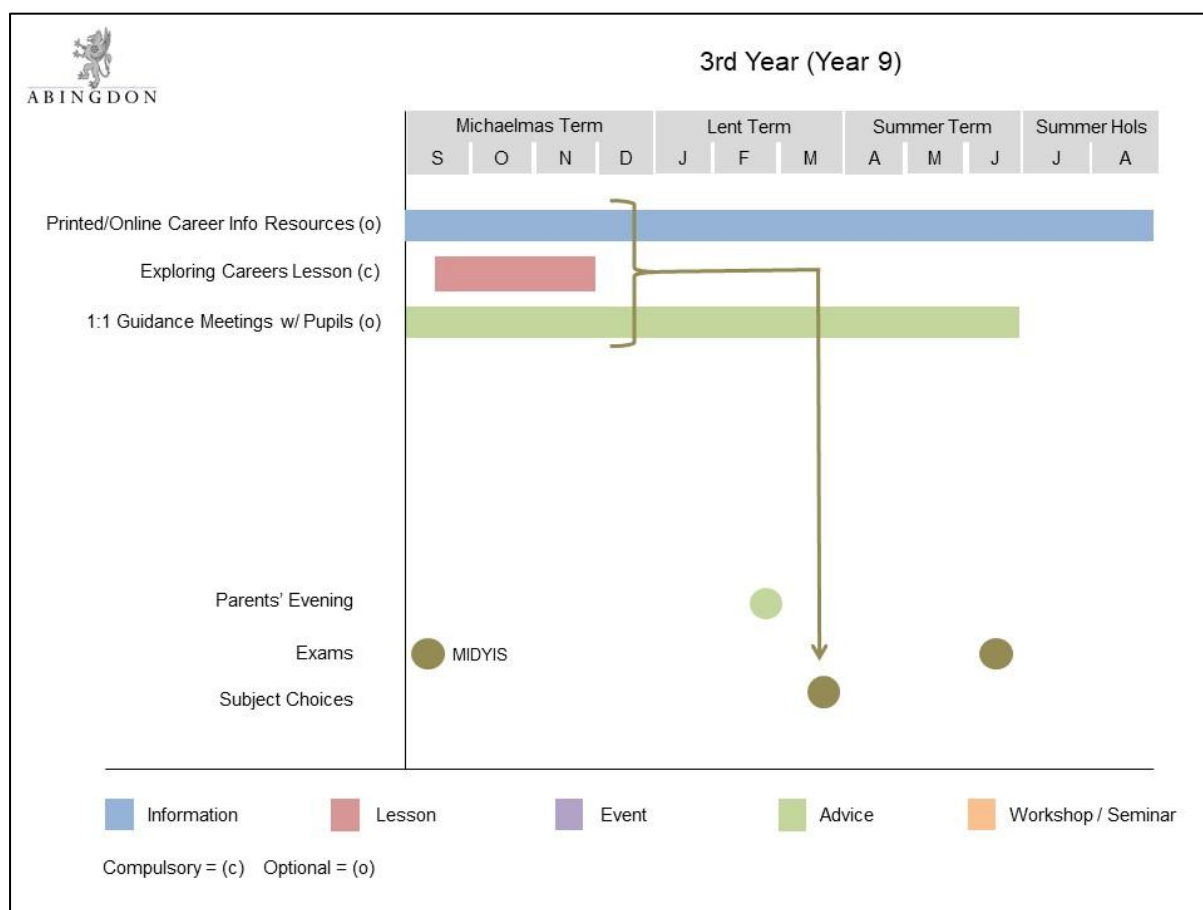
The same lesson is delivered in June to Year 8 pupils at Abingdon Prep School.



### 3rd Year (Year 9, age 13-14, KS3, Middle School)

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 Michaelmas 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.



## 4th Year (Year 10, age 14-15, KS4, Middle School)

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.

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.

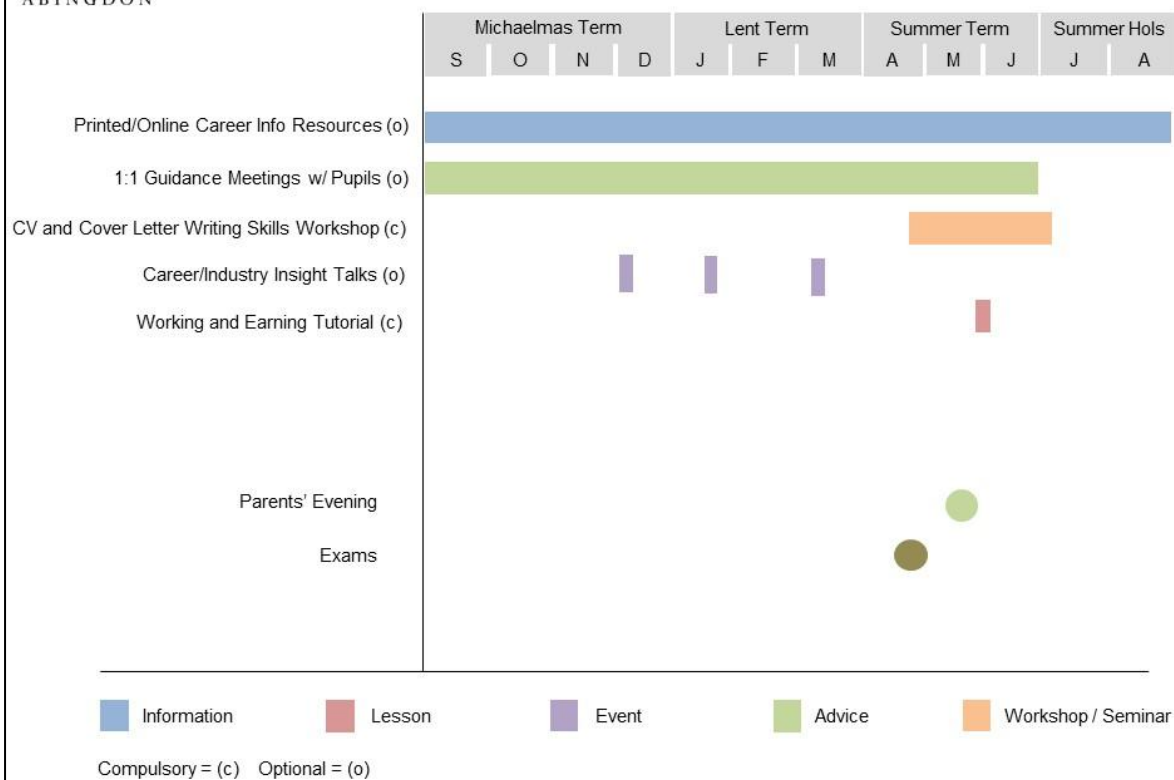
Career Advisers from the **Armed Forces** visit late in Michaelmas Term to advise 4<sup>th</sup> year students on careers in the Army, Navy/Marines, and Air Force.

In Summer Term, every 4th Year pupil attends a '**CV and Cover Letter Writing**' skills workshop in which they learn how to write a CV and Cover Letter in order to apply for work experience. 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 early June, 4<sup>th</sup> year tutors deliver a lesson called '**Working and Earning**' during which students learn about the age at which they can start working and earning, the kind of work they can do from age 14, the benefits and drawbacks of working while a student, how to search for a weekend or summer job, and how much students can earn per hour, starting with the minimum wage.

Several times a year, the Career Guidance Programme brings external speakers (often parents and alumni) to Abingdon School to host informal '**Career/industry Insight Talks**'. These talks are designed to give 4th year, 5th year and 6th form pupils insights into what different industries 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 (Year 10)



## 5th Year (Year 11, age 15-16, KS4, Middle School)

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.

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**.

Career Advisers from the **Armed Forces** visit Abingdon School late in Michaelmas Term to advise 5<sup>th</sup> year students on careers in the Army, Navy/Marines, and Air Force.

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

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.

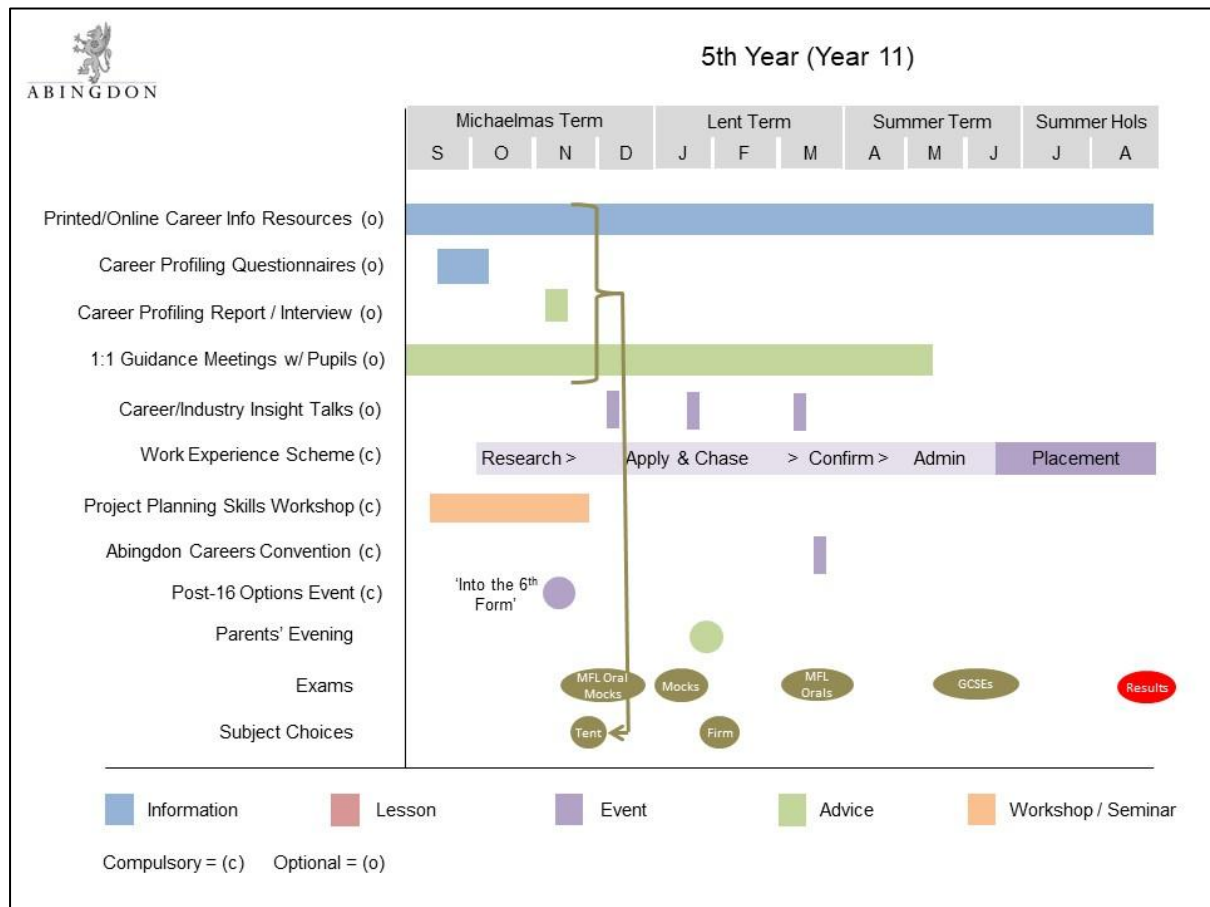
Kicking off at the beginning of the year, and continuing in stages throughout, is a 5th Year **Work Experience Scheme**, strongly encouraged for all 5th Year pupils. Pupils are charged with finding their own placement and undertaking the placement for one or two weeks immediately after completion of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

The annual **Abingdon Career Convention**, jointly run by Abingdon School and St Helen and St Katharine, is held in mid-March and features parents and alumni of both schools, as well as local employers, representing a wide range of occupations. Pupils can meet with representatives one to one, participate in small group discussions, and attend talks. The event is compulsory for 5th Year pupils.

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## L6 (Year 12, age 16-17, Upper School)

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.

Career Advisers from the **Armed Forces** visit Abingdon School late in Michaelmas Term to advise L6 students on careers in the Army, Navy/Marines, and Air Force.

Abingdon School alumni (Old Abingdonians) and current parents are invited to host high quality, one to two-week summer holiday work experience placements (in person at their employer's premises) as part of a town-wide **Summer Holiday Work Experience Scheme**. The scheme is run jointly by Abingdon School, Fitzharrys, John Mason, and St Helen and St Katharine. All participating schools recruit placement hosts, and pupils from all participating schools who will be between L6 and U6 during the summer holiday. The list of work experience placements is announced at 6th Form assembly in mid-March (before Easter holiday).

In addition, the annual **Sixth Form Careers Evening** is on a Friday in November, at which current parents and alumni (at early or middle stages in their career) share with pupils 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.

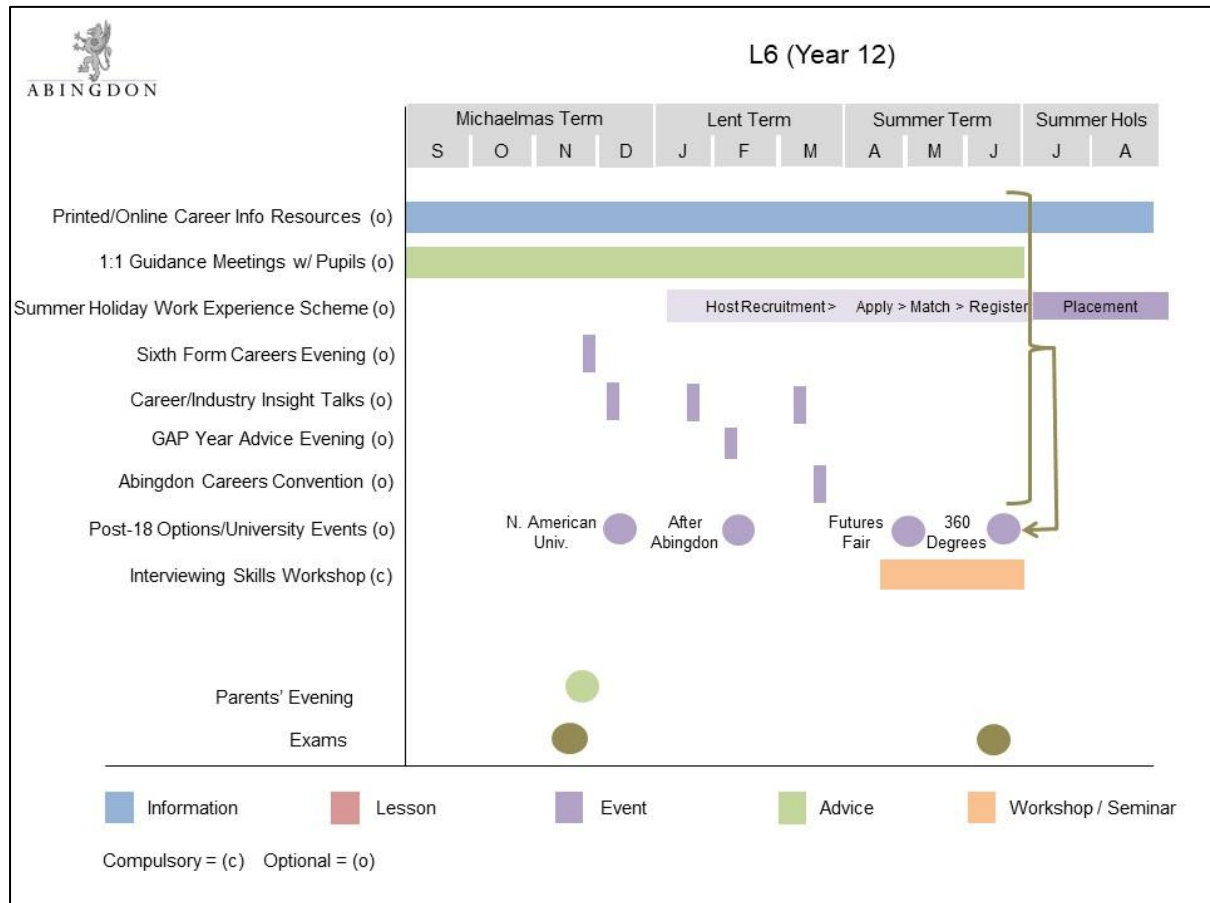
For pupils considering taking a year off after leaving school, Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine jointly run a **GAP Year Advice Evening** in February. The event includes a presentation on all the considerations involved in electing, planning, and managing a Gap Year, as well as specialist advice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

At the '**After Abingdon**' event in January, L6 students learn about universities as well as alternatives to going to university, including Level 4 and 5 vocational qualifications (higher nationals and foundation degrees), higher and degree apprenticeships, school leaver programmes, and professional qualifications.

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.

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

- **Abingdon Careers Convention** in mid-March
- **Career/Industry Insight Talks** in Michaelmas and Lent Term (including classroom lessons, linking curriculum content with work done in specific occupations and sectors/industries)

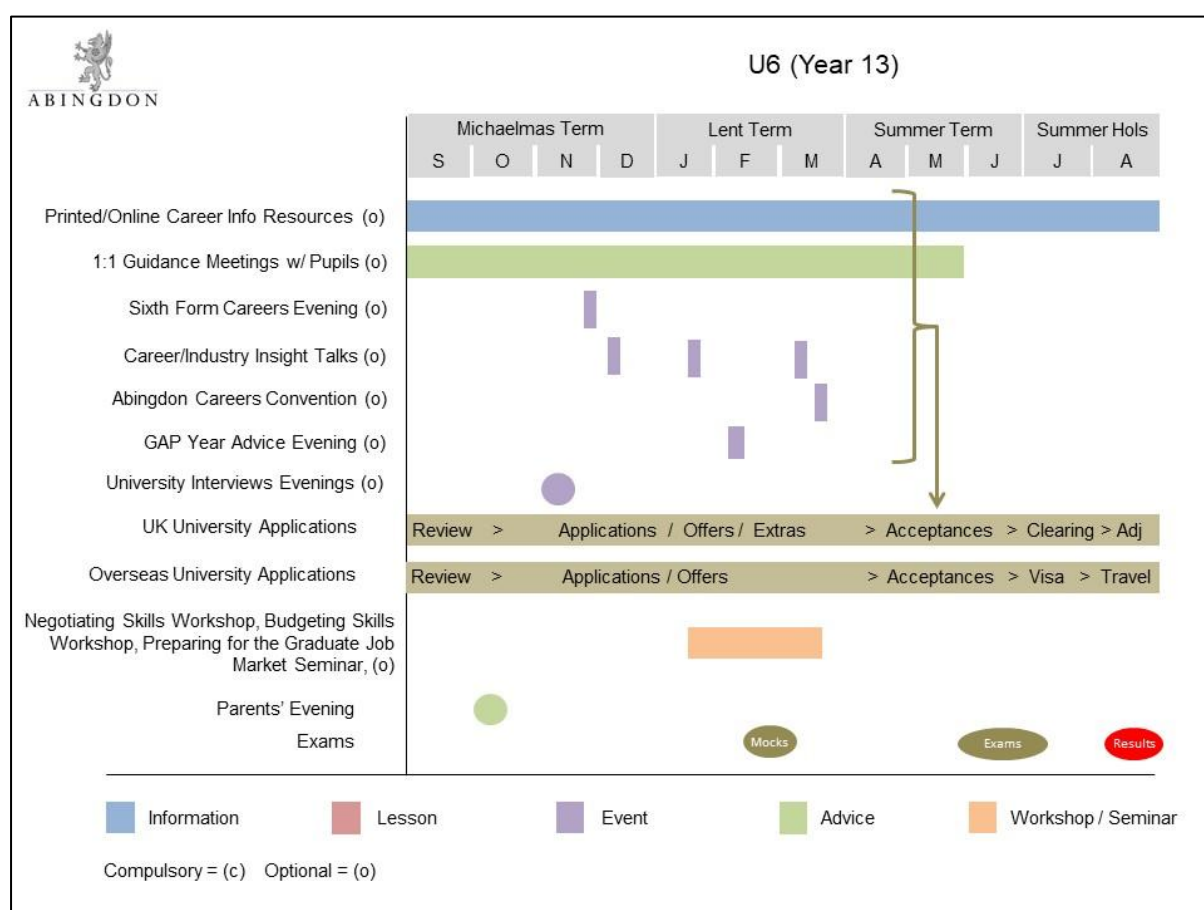


## U6 (Year 13, age 17-18, Upper School): 170-185 pupils

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)
- **Sixth Form Careers Evening** in November
- **Armed Forces Careers Advisor Meetings** in November/December
- **GAP Year Advice Evening** in February
- **Abingdon Careers Convention** in mid-March
- **Career/Industry Insight Talks** in Michaelmas and Lent Term

In Lent Term, U6 pupils are offered three opportunities, and can choose one, two, all three, or none depending on their interest and need! The first two are skills workshop. One is on **Negotiation**, the other on **Budgeting**. Pupils can also attend a seminar called '**Preparing for the Graduate Job Market**', which offers advice on what pupils can do while they are at university to put them in the best position possible to compete for a top graduate job.



## 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.
- 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 their parents. Parents can support their child's career thinking in several ways:

- Engage your child in informal conversation (at the right time and place!) about what they enjoy doing, what they are (or could become) good at, and what gives them personal satisfaction and reward. Ask them questions that facilitate self-exploration of their thoughts and self-confidence in their ideas.
- Remind them 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 they keep as broad a view as possible of career options and not narrow prematurely.
- Encourage and enable them to pursue their ambitions, even if you don't share their enthusiasm.

- Take them to your workplace, talk to them 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 they get a sense of what the world of work is like, understands how careers evolve, and realise that they will need to prepare for a career, whatever they do.
- 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 them 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 them (but let them struggle to find their own placement before you intervene!)
- Support their participation in a range of extra-curricular activities, in and out of school, through which they can build a whole host of capabilities valuable in a career and life.
- Suggest they make 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!