



Subject Choices

Upper School
2024-26

Where to start?

Choosing subjects to study in the Upper School might seem a daunting prospect to many students. We are proud to be able to offer so much choice. Students have the choice of a wide suite of A Level and IB subjects, but that doesn't necessarily make the decision-making process any easier. At the same time, conversations might start to turn towards university or even career aspirations. Students might be forgiven for not knowing where to start.

When thinking about subject choices, it might help to realise that this is just one decision point in the academic journey. Many decisions have already been taken that have got our students to where they are now. Equally, there are many decisions that do not have to be made quite yet. If a student has an idea of what they might wish to study at university then it may help in making subject choices, although they should be prepared for the possibility that they may wish to change their mind over those university decisions. Equally, students who do not yet know what they wish to do in later life can still make sensible decisions at this stage.

So where is a good place to start? The question that should be the starting point for any student is **“What is my favourite subject?”** Follow up questions might be **“What am I best at? What interests me the most?”** Our aim is that students are enthused and excited by their academic studies – and if they are, the chances are that they will work harder and achieve more.

From here, students can start to choose other subjects and build up a package of A Level or IB subjects. They should consider what their choices would be within each curriculum. Remember that the majority of schools only offer one curriculum. The vast majority of our pupils would be able to thrive at a school that only offered A Levels or just the IB. It is important to remember there is not one singular right or wrong choice. However, if students can envisage their subject choices within both curricula, then it may be that a favourite emerges. Perhaps the focussed nature of fewer subjects at A Level appeals or the breadth that the IB offers in conjunction with the depth of higher level subjects might be more desirable.

Finally – keep an open mind. Seek and listen to the advice that is available. Students should talk to their parents, their teachers and their HMs and tutors. In addition to this booklet, there is more detailed subject specific information on the subject choices website: <http://subjectchoices.wellingtoncollege.org.uk>



The Process

The subject choices process launches in the second half of the Michaelmas term. This gives students sufficient time to explore the possible options and to start to make decisions. We ask that pupils make a preliminary choice by the end of the Michaelmas term which is used to start the College's planning for the following academic year. We ask pupils to make their final choices by half term of the Lent term. This is so that they can go on to concentrate on their preparation for Mock and GCSE exams.

We encourage students to discuss and consult their potential subject choices and remain open to feedback. They should discuss their choices with their parents, their HMs and tutors as well as their subject teachers. The 5th form parents conference is a useful time for pupils and parents to discuss subject choices with teachers and seek advice.

It is important that students reach a well-informed decision and commit to it. However, some students will inevitably wish to change their mind. We would discourage students from changing their minds based on the limited evidence that their performance in their mock exams or their GCSEs provides, but if a student wished to make a change to their subjects, they can do so at the start of the Michaelmas term of the Lower Sixth (provided that the change can be accommodated). These changes should be complete by the first four weeks of the term.



A Levels

A Level Subjects

Ancient History
Art
Art History
Art Textiles
Biology
Business
Chemistry
Classical Greek
Computer Science
Dance
Design Engineering
Drama
Economics
English
French
Further Maths
Geography
German
History
Latin
Maths
Music
Music Technology
PE
Philosophy
Photography
Physics
Politics
Product Design
Spanish

Pupils who choose A Levels have two distinct routes. Three A Level route where pupils pursue three A Level subjects alongside an EPQ and a four A level route.

It is expected that the majority of A Level pupils will choose the three A Level plus EPQ route (in the past 80% of A Level pupils have done so).

The list of A Level subjects is shown on the left. While pupils have a free choice of subjects, it is important that the overall combination of subjects is considered.

In addition to the three A Level subjects, pupils will undertake the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). This additional qualification is designed to add breadth to their A Level studies (in a similar way to the Extended Essay and ToK in the IB diploma). The EPQ is well-regarded by universities and many will reduce their offers if pupils achieve a good grade in the EPQ (normally an A).

A smaller number of pupils may wish to opt for the four A Level route. These pupils should only do so with the intention of continuing all four subjects throughout the two-year courses. Due to time constraints, pupils who opt for the four A Level route may opt out of the EPQ.

The four A Level route is not necessarily the default choice for those pupils who are scholars or who have Oxbridge ambitions. Most Oxbridge offers are for three A Levels.

Although any combination of four A Levels would be considered, the common combinations are those which have Further Maths, a second Language (modern or classical) or an Arts subject as their fourth subject.



The IB

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
English Literature	Classical Greek French German Latin Mandarin Spanish	Anthropology (SL) Art History (SL) Business Management Economics Geography History Philosophy Politics Psychology	Biology Chemistry Computer Science Design Technology Physics Sport Science	Maths (Analysis) Maths (Applications)	Visual Arts Music Theatre Studies Dance (Or another subject from groups 2,3 or 4)
		Environmental Systems & Societies			

Students taking the IB choose six subjects, one from the six groups shown above. One subject must be chosen from each of the first five groups, while the sixth subject may be a subject from group 6 or a second subject from groups 2, 3 or 4.

Three subjects are chosen at Higher Level and three at Standard Level. Higher Level subjects are generally equivalent in complexity and depth to their A Level counterparts.

In addition, students must complete the Core which consists of the Extended Essay (4000 words on a subject of the student's choice), Theory of Knowledge (an interdisciplinary course exploring the nature of knowledge) and Creativity, Action, Service - CAS (sports, arts, leadership activities and community service or CCF). The Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge contribute a maximum of 3 points to the total. There are no points awarded for the CAS programme, but students can only be awarded the Diploma if they have completed their 150 CAS hours.

Each subject has a coursework component which, in conjunction with exams at the end of the two-year course, leads to a grade from 1 to 7. Additionally, the core contributes a maximum of 3 points so that the overall maximum number of points achievable is 45.



Choosing Subjects

There are many valid reasons for students to choose different subjects. As a starting point for making decisions, students are well advised to consider the subjects that they enjoy or the subjects in which they excel; indeed these are often the same subjects. This is because students are more likely to work hard in subjects that they enjoy and are therefore more likely to enjoy success in them.

Some students may have an idea of what they might wish to study at university. The table on the following page shows some common university courses and the subjects which facilitate entry to them. This approach only leads to sensible decision making insofar as the initial university aspiration is sensible. Many students will not have a clear idea of what they would like to pursue later in life and those that do may change their mind. The initial advice to focus on the subjects that they enjoy most and succeed at remains the best starting point for making decisions.

IB students have to pick subjects according to the structure of the IB curriculum. A Level students on the other hand have a free choice and it is important that there is some coherence to their choices. For example, pupils who are choosing Science A Levels would do well to choose at least one other Maths or Science subject. Likewise, a humanities subject would combine well with other humanities subjects. You should refer to the subject choices website for more information about which subject combinations are encouraged or recommended.

To succeed at A Levels or IB Higher Level subjects, students will need a certain level of attainment. For most subjects, this is a grade 7 at GCSE. For Maths, Sciences and Languages, students should have an 8 at GCSE and students who wish to opt for Further Maths A Level should have a 9 in GCSE Maths. If a student is not achieving this grade in the Mock exams, they should question whether they have made sensible subject choices.



University Subject	Essential Subjects	Useful Subjects
Accountancy		Maths, Business / Economics
Archaeology		
Architecture	Art / DET	Maths, Physics
Art & Design	Art / DET	
Biochemistry	Chemistry, Biology	Maths, Physics, Further Maths
Biology	Biology, Maths	Chemistry
Biomedical Sciences	Chemistry, Biology	Maths, Physics, Further Maths
Business Studies		Maths, Business
Chemical Engineering	Chemistry, Maths	Physics
Chemistry	Chemistry, Maths	Another Science
Classics	Latin / Greek	Ancient History
Computer Science	Maths, Computer Science	Physics
Dance	Dance	Drama, Music, English, Biology, PE
Drama	English / Drama	
Economics	Maths	Economics, Computer Science, History, Geography
Engineering	Maths, Physics	Further Maths, DET, Computer Science
English	English	History, Philosophy, Languages, Classics
French	French	Another Language, English, History, Politics
Geography	Geography	Maths, Economics, Politics, Biology
Geology	Chemistry + Maths/Physics/Biology	Geography, Computer Science
German	German	Another Language, English, History, Politics
History	History	Economics, English, Philosophy, Politics, Classics, Languages
History of Art		Art, English, History, Philosophy, Art History, Languages
Law		History
Materials Science	Maths, Physics/Chemistry	Further Maths, Computer Science, DET
Mathematics	Maths, Further Maths	
Medicine	Chemistry, Biology, Maths	Physics, Further Maths, contrasting subject
Music	Music	An essay based subject
Philosophy		Philosophy, Maths, Classics
Physics	Maths, Physics	Further Maths, Chemistry, Computer Science
Politics		Politics, History, Philosophy, Economics, English
Psychology	Biology or other Science/Maths	
RS / Theology		Philosophy, English, History, Classics
Spanish	Spanish	Another Language, English, History, Politics
Sports Science	A Science / Maths	PE / Sports Science
Veterinary Science	Chemistry, Biology, Maths	Physics

The table above gives a guide to essential and useful subjects for applying to some popular university courses. It may be assumed that this applies to A Level and IB Higher Level subjects although IB requirements do vary more. Essential subjects are those that are required by the majority of courses, although there may be some courses with alternative entry requirements. It is recommended that students research courses on the UCAS website since entry requirements vary between Universities.





Queries relating to the possible combinations of subjects and the timetable should be directed to Dr Heathcote. Subject specific queries may be better answered by the Heads of Departments, whose contacts can be found in the calendar. Please note that, in general, queries regarding subject choices and changes will be dealt with during term time. Queries made during College holidays will be put on hold until the beginning of term. This will enable discussion between subject heads where necessary and results in answers being available within a couple of days rather than a couple of weeks.

Useful Contacts

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