

Post-16 Options Guidance



General principles for selecting your post-16 courses

Guidance for Post-16 Options Counselling

Choosing your post 16 courses is a hard decision and your decisions need to be informed, considered and judicious. Choosing between one and four subjects, as almost all students do as they begin Key Stage 5, can have significant impact on your ability to pursue a variety of different higher education (HE) and career pathways in your future. As such, the below (very general) principles are a good starting point when considering which courses to take at post-16:

- **Play to your strengths.** Do things you are good at as getting good grades will leave options open to you in the future.
- **Do things that you love and are passionate about,** after all, you are going to spend a considerable amount of time each week studying these subjects. Students who are passionate tend to put in greater effort and achieve greater success.
- **If you have an idea or an inclination as to what you would like to do as a career/vocation/HE pathway, ensure that you thoroughly research the entry requirements to the required courses** that you will need to take in the future. Use these as a starting point.
- **If you don't know what you want to do as a career or as a HE pathway** (as is the case for the vast majority of Key Stage 4 students), **make sure you take a variety of subjects that play to your strengths** but keep your options open. Remember, not knowing what you want to do is entirely normal and not a problem at this stage!



A-Levels vs BTECs

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- A-Levels are still the most common route into university, but students applying with a combination of A-Levels and Level 3 BTECs or 1-3 BTEC qualifications are increasing.
- **BTECs are no longer viewed as lesser qualifications than A-Levels** and most universities accept them as viable routes into higher education. It is worth noting that some of the top universities, notably Oxford and Cambridge. BTECs are also often not considered as valuable by some international universities or colleges. However, most of the Degree Level Apprenticeship providers do consider BTECs as valid qualifications for entry.
- **A-Levels are assessed as end of course exams, with NEAs or coursework making up a minority component of some subjects. By contrast, BTECs offer a chance to do a more balanced combination of exams and coursework, with exams being able to be sat at stages through the course.** Exams can be re-sat. Outcomes thus tend to be higher than in A-Levels as students have the opportunity to refine coursework and re-sit exams.
- **BTEC's come in 3 different formats at A-Level:**
 - Extended Certificate- equivalent to 1 A-Level
 - Diploma - equivalent to 2 A-Levels
 - Extended Diploma – equivalent to 3 A-levels.
 - It is worth advising students that they should only be taking the Extended Diploma (we only offer this in Sport) if they are very confident of the future route they want to take- if this equates to 3 A-Levels, it narrows their education significantly.
- **BTECs are delivered across 6 (Extended Certificate) , 12 (Diploma) or 18 (Extended Diploma) periods per fortnight as opposed to 10 periods per fortnight for each A-Level** (except Further Maths). A student as such, could do a BTEC Diploma or 2x BTEC Ext Certificates and still also sit 2x A-Levels. This would be a very sensible subject selection for many of our students, so long as the subjects fit with the timetable blocking.



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PROVISIONAL SIXTH FORM ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

2024-26



PROVISIONAL A-LEVEL / BTEC OPTIONS						OPTIONAL EXTRAS	COMPUSLORY EXTRAS (Y12 +)	
Art A-Level	Chemistry A-Level	Economics A-Level	History A-Level	Music A-Level	Sport BTEC Diploma	Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award	Games	Ivy House Leadership Award
Biology A-Level	Computer Science A-Level	English Literature A-Level	Mathematics A-Level	Psychology A-Level		Extended Project Qualification	Enrichment	Sherfield MBA
Business Studies BTEC Extended Certificate	Design & Technology A-Level	French A-Level	Further Mathematics A-Level	Physics A-Level		Crest Award	PSHE + Independent Study	Airwalk Reply Project Leadership Programme
Business Studies BTEC Diploma	Drama A-Level	Geography A-Level	Media Studies A-Level	Sport BTEC Extended Certificate		Academic Competitions	EAL / IELTS (For International Students)	Sherfield Futures and Works Programmes <small>Work Experience + Careers Programmes</small>

*Subject availability dependent on student numbers

Advice for students who are not sure of what they want to do in the future

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- **The below principles are a good starting point if you don't have an idea what you want to do:**
 - **Play to your strengths.** Do things you are good at as getting good grades will leave options open to you in the future.
 - **Do things that you love and are passionate about,** after all, you are going to spend a considerable amount of time each week studying these subjects. Students who are passionate tend to put in greater effort and achieve greater success.
 - If you are a **very able student (Grade 7 in subject that relate to A-Level choices), consider taking four A-Levels** to keep a greater breadth of options available to you in the future. If you are equally strong in STEM and humanities/arts/social science subjects, consider taking a 2-2 or 3-1 split across these subjects to keep options open. If you only want to study 3 A-levels, consider a 2-1 split. If you are nervous of taking four A-levels and having c. 40 hours of lessons per fortnight (and hence less time to complete independent study), **consider taking a combination of 2x A-Levels and 2x BTEC Extended Certificates.** This will help you keep a great deal of breadth in terms of your curriculum but would be 32 hours of lessons per fortnight as opposed to 40.
 - If you are a **good mathematician (GCSE grade 7 or higher), strongly consider Maths** as it facilitates so many different higher education pathways.
 - **Look at interdisciplinary HE pathways such as joint honours degrees, interdisciplinary degree pathways such as PPE/HSBS and generic HE subjects like business or economics** that can then be deployed in various employment pathways. Look at the entry requirements for these courses (see slide entitled: "Required subjects for commonly taken degree courses in the UK") and make sure you meet some of them with your A-Level/BTEC choices, as if you still don't know what you want to do at the age of 18, these courses will continue to keep your options open.



When should a student study 4 A-Levels/BTECs?

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Students may want to consider taking 4 x A-Levels or BTECs in the following circumstances:

- **4-A Levels should only be considered if a student is very able** (Grade 7 or higher in each of the related GCSE subjects is an advisable metric to judge this). This is due to the fact that students taking four A-levels having a greater number of lessons (40 per fortnight, and thus less time to complete independent study. On top of this, students will also receive more homework if they are taking four A-Levels, with less time to complete the work, so they must be able, driven and organized if they are to be successful on such a pathway.
- **This is slightly less relevant when BTECs are considered.** As BTEC Extended Certificates are delivered through 6 hours of teaching per fortnight, selecting 2 / 3 A-Levels and 1 / 2 BTEC Extended Certificates is less challenging in terms of time commitment.
- **If you intend to eventually apply to a highly competitive, HE course or institution**, both inside and outside of the UK, taking four subjects can be advantageous as, if you do well in all four, you will demonstrate a broader or deeper knowledge and talent base.
- **If you want to keep your HE/career options open**, 4 subjects can be advisable. You can take a broad spectrum of subjects so that you close fewer different pathways until you have a better idea of what HE course/career you would like to pursue.
- **If you have a passion for a lot of different subjects**, taking 4 courses allows you to keep exploring these. Lots of students like to take 3 subjects that are required for a specific degree course, but then do an extra one simply because they are passionate about a given subject and enjoy it.
- **Taking 4 subjects can help you build a broader skill set**, which may well benefit you in your HE application or course, or when you start your career. For instance, if you wanted to study Engineering, you would probably choose to study Maths, Further Maths and Physics. However, taking a fourth subject such as Drama, Psychology or Art will give you different skills that may help your teamwork, oracy or creativity as you progress in life and your career.



When should students choose to study Further Maths?

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- **Further Maths A-Level MUST be taken in combination with Maths A-Level** as it builds on the content, knowledge and skills taught in the Maths A-Level.
- **Further Maths should ideally be taken as one of four A-Levels or equivalent** qualifications. If it is taken as one of 3 A-levels or equivalent, it means a student will have a very narrow curriculum.
- **Students who take Further Mathematics MUST achieve at least a Grade 7 in GCSE Maths but SHOULD ideally achieve at least a Grade 8** if they want to access the higher grades on offer.
- **Students who are especially strong mathematicians and love Maths** (Grade 9 at GCSE) should consider taking Further Maths simply because the end grade is likely to be good and hence this will facilitate successful and competitive, HE applications. As previously stated, doing things that you enjoy is very important, so having a passion for hard Maths and problem solving is essential for any student wanting to study Further Mathematics.
- **Further Maths A-Level should be strongly considered for any student wanting to apply to highly competitive higher education providers for courses that have a high mathematical component**, as other candidates will almost all be taking Further Maths. These subjects include but are not limited to degrees/apprenticeships in:
 - Maths & related subjects, Computing & related subjects, Accountancy and/or Finance & related subjects, Economics, PPE, Engineering & related subjects.



Required subjects for commonly taken degree courses in the UK

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PLEASE NOTE: All the below guidance is generic, and students should check specific entry requirements listed by various HE providers for specific courses at specific HE providers.

Medicine/ Dentistry/ Veterinary Science

- Chemistry is an absolute must, and Biology is a must for the vast majority of universities. Maths is often taken as a 3rd subject, but subjects like a humanity or Drama can be just as valuable as they are more discursive and support the soft skills required of successful doctors.

Engineering/Mechanical Engineering/Civil Engineering

- Maths is the facilitating subjects, and physics will be a requirement for most courses. For all students hoping to apply to top end universities, Further Maths is highly recommended as the strongest candidates will all be taking it. For more specific forms of engineering, such as Chemical Engineering, specific subjects will be required, obviously Chemistry in this instance.

Economics and Finance / Accounting (or similar):

- Maths is the facilitating subject, and for all students hoping to apply to top end universities, Further Maths is highly recommended as the strongest candidates will all be taking it. Economics or Business Studies are not technically required but will obviously help students develop a passion for the subject and produce stronger applications. As such, they are advantageous.

Business Management:

- Some courses require Maths (these tend to be BSc or MSc courses as opposed to BA or MA courses), whilst other do not.

Computer Science:/Software Development/ Data Science:

- Maths is the facilitating subject and must be taken, and for all students hoping to apply to top end universities, Further Maths is highly recommended as the strongest candidates will all be taking it. Economics or Business Studies Computer Science is not technically required, but taking it is natural if this is your chosen pathway and doing so will produce stronger applications.

Law:

- At least one essay subject is almost essential. History is probably the most directly relevant subject with the source analysis and assessment of evidence mirroring some of the skills required of Law students.

Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE):

- Maths plus at least one essay subject are strongly recommended. For applications to Oxford, Further Maths is recommended as a fourth qualification, alongside 2x essay subjects. Politics, Philosophy and Economics are not required as specific subjects.

Human Social and Political Sciences (HSPS):

- Essay based subjects are considered to be advantageous. Serious candidates will probably study at least 2x essay subjects.

Degree Level Apprenticeships:

- Different apprenticeship providers will expect different things, but generally, the same principles as above will apply for apprenticeship pathways in the above subjects. It is always common sense to take the most relevant subjects (offered by the school) to the choice of degree level apprenticeship.



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