



From: the Curriculum Director, Oliver Lomax

To all Fifth Year pupils and their parents

16 November 2023

TENTATIVE PREFERENCE FOR SIXTH FORM SUBJECTS

This letter details the process for choosing A Level subjects for next year.

Sixth Form Entry Qualification

Now is the time to consider the subjects that you wish to study in the sixth form and your career options. During the next few months your immediate academic target will be the successful completion of your GCSE courses. 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).

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.

Number and selection of A-level subjects

At Abingdon, we wish you to express your preference for the four subjects you most wish to study and a backup fifth preference. You should assume that you will study all four subjects for at least one term and you will be able to study all four for the whole two years if that is your preference. We ask all of the Fifth Year students to submit preferences, even if you are thinking about being somewhere else for your sixth form years (there is a place to let us know this on the form).

Most Abingdon pupils drop to three subjects after Christmas or Easter in the Lower Sixth, or at the start of the Upper Sixth; there are set times when the dropping of a subject is allowed and sixth form tutors will advise if they think dropping is appropriate. Our aim is to create the sixth form curriculum which is most suitable for each individual. If, a few weeks into the Lower Sixth, you feel that you have chosen the wrong subject it is often possible to change but there is no guarantee that this will be possible and there is inevitably catch-up work to be done in the new subject when we can achieve a swap. Changes such as this become less and less feasible the later we get into the first term.

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November 2023:	January 2024:	February 2024:	September 2024:	January 2025 onwards:
Tentative Subject Preferences	Taster Lessons in subjects you are not sure about	Firm Subject Preferences	A Level courses begin	Option to drop to 3 subjects. Option to take EPQ
Tentative Subject Preference	Taster Lesson	Firm Subject Preference	A Level Subject	A Level Subject
Tentative Subject Preference	Taster Lesson	Firm Subject Preference	A Level Subject	A Level Subject
Tentative Subject Preference	Taster Lesson	Firm Subject Preference	A Level Subject	A Level Subject
Tentative Subject Preference	Taster Lesson	Firm Subject Preference	A Level Subject	<i>A Level Subject</i>
Back-up Subject	Taster Lesson	Back-up Subject		<i>EPQ</i>

The range of sixth form subjects

The available A Level subjects at Abingdon are Ancient History, Art & Design, Biology, Business, Computer Science, Chemistry, Design & Technology, Drama, Economics, English Literature, French, Geography, German, Greek, History, Latin, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physics, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies and Spanish.

- Politics is taught at St Helen's solely by St Helen's teachers.
- Drama and Psychology are taught jointly with St Helen's, though some Psychology classes may have Abingdon students only.
- Some Economics sets also include girls from St Helen's but all sets are taught solely by Abingdon teachers.

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 (since Further Maths will include A Level Maths).
- 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.

At this stage we welcome preferences for any combination of subjects within the guidance above. When the timetable is constructed, however, there is sometimes a small number of pupils with subject combinations that are difficult to fit in. We will inform you as early as possible if this is the case.

Seeking guidance

You need to consider all the information, opinions and guidance available to you. Your tutor is a good person to talk to in the first place, and they will be able to advise you or put you in

touch with relevant people. If you have any queries about your suitability for any particular subject course, consult your teacher in that subject and/or the relevant Head of Department.

More information about the different subject courses can be found in *The Sixth Form 2024* and general guidance on choosing subjects in *Advice on Choosing A Level Subjects at Abingdon* both of which will be available in the Curriculum section of the school website: <https://www.abingdon.org.uk/academic/curriculum/>

Timescale and deadlines

Each student will be sent the link to the *Fifth Year Tentative Preferences* online form via their school email account on Tuesday 21 November. You are asked to complete the form by **Monday 27 November**. This deadline is necessary to allow early planning of the timetable and staffing for the next academic year. After mocks, early next term, there will be the chance to take part in sixth form “taster” lessons to get a better idea about the subjects you are considering. There will then be a Parents’ Evening, and then you will be asked for final preferences in early February 2024. After that I will begin writing the timetable and, though changes may still be possible they will become more difficult to achieve the later on a change of mind is conveyed to me.

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