



MERCHANT TAYLORS'
School

SIXTH FORM OPTIONS

Guidance and Course Details

2023/2025

We are a community forged from innovation, bravery, confidence, inspiration and joy

We inspire a life-long love of learning and provide academic excellence for pupils, staff and support staff. We have a culture of collaboration, coaching and challenge. We are brave in our pursuit of excellence: progress is driven by innovation and reflection.

The co-curriculum supports and enriches the academic curriculum through clubs, societies, trips and publications. We celebrate and explore the relationship between academic excellence and co-curricular participation: at different points in a school career, the focus upon each element will vary. Similarly, we maintain the balance between our focus upon promoting excellence and wide participation. We provide co-curricular opportunities to develop the character of everyone in the school - pupils, staff and support staff. All aspire to become more well-rounded, charming, confident, enthusiastic and independent. We work as a team, creating lasting bonds within our community.

We care for each other in a civilised, collaborative and respectful manner. That spirit creates a safe, inspiring and inclusive environment that promotes self-esteem. Our focus is upon the individual and the community: knowing and caring for everyone in the school, whether pupil, staff or support staff, creates a place in which people feel they belong, have shared purpose and have a role to play. We use our strength to serve the wider community beyond the school.

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INTRODUCTION

Choosing your A Levels can feel daunting. You will be conscious that you are making a decision which will impact your options for university and indeed for your career beyond, so it is vital that you take time and advice on this.

The purpose of this booklet is to enable you to make informed decisions. Making good choices now will help you to enjoy the Sixth Form, to flourish in your chosen disciplines and be in a strong position to apply to first-rate universities in a year or so.

The Merchant Taylors' Sixth Form

The choice open to you is a simple one.

- You need to choose **four** subjects to study in the Lower Sixth. You may choose just about any four subjects from this booklet that you wish. We will do our very best to try and accommodate all combinations – though not all combinations may be possible, in those cases we will let those individuals know as early as we can.
- Those interested in Further Maths should choose three non-Maths options and 'Maths & Further Maths'. If approved and you spend the Autumn of the Lower Sixth in an accelerated Maths class, you may be invited to swap one of your four subjects for Further Maths at Christmas of the Lower Sixth. Only those studying the FMSQ are eligible for this choice.
- Pupils should not choose both Philosophy and Religious Studies, since the course has an overlap.
- At Christmas of the Lower Sixth we ask you to nominate three subjects which you intend to pursue through to A Level and we ask your teachers about your progress in these subjects.
- A very few boys ask us if they can continue with four subjects (not including Further Maths) through to A Level; in exceptional circumstances this is appropriate and we will discuss this with you if you think it a good idea. Most MTS boys prefer to do three A Levels and then pursue an EPQ, MOOCs, essay competitions and so on in order to broaden their experience.

This means that, for many, you will study something for a full term in the Lower Sixth for which you do not get a formal qualification. This is not a problem and nor should it be seen as one. Education is about more than the accrual of pieces of paper, it is about broadening you as a person. By studying something in the Lower Sixth that isn't examined, you can choose something new – to test it out, or choose something that will enhance your other subjects, excite your interests and strengthen your application to university.

Alongside your chosen taught curriculum courses, you will also be following a unique extension and enrichment programme. Throughout the Lower Sixth you will have a weekly lecture on anything from Mental Health to Party Culture, Safe Driving to the life of a magician. After Christmas in the Lower Sixth, when curriculum time is freed-up, extension lessons begin for those seeking to apply to the most competitive courses at university. In addition, you will have time on timetable to complete Independent Study Courses (including the EPQ) and also one hour a week with an Academic Supervisor, who will encourage you to stretch yourself beyond your core studies.

Our Sixth Form curriculum is unique to MTS, although many schools imitate elements of it.

How do you choose your A Levels?

There are three questions that you should ask yourself in advance of making your choices:

- Which subjects do you most enjoy?
- Which subjects are you best at?
- What do you want to do when you leave the Sixth Form?

The first of these questions is the most important and often strongly linked to the second question. You will, almost certainly, be more enthused about doing that which you enjoy; you will work harder and will do better at those subjects. The choices you make now, whittling down 10 subjects to four, are hard. If you choose wisely then you will have an exciting and enjoyable two years, if not, then you will find it an unenjoyable slog and will not do as well as you could have done. Do not be afraid of challenge here; it can be immensely satisfying to take on an academically demanding subject and get to the heart of it. Equally, be realistic about your potential and listen to MTS staff; these qualifications will have a big impact on your life after school.

You may, even at this stage, have a strong idea of what you want to do at university. However, you may not and that is also fine. All universities, especially the most competitive, have one thing in common; they want passionate and qualified pupils to study there. By choosing subjects that you enjoy and at which you excel, you will progress further in the Sixth Form. If you do this, then you will end up at the best university possible.

A recent report by The Sutton Trust concluded that **irrespective of the course studied**, graduates from the 13 most selective universities earn more and are far more likely to be in professional employment than graduates from less prestigious institutions. You stand a far better chance of getting into a top university if you study a subject you enjoy and are good at. Some vocational courses at university require at least AAA for entry, as well as specifying certain A Levels (e.g. Medicine requires Biology and Chemistry; Economics requires Mathematics). If you are interested in these courses then you need to choose the relevant subjects, **but also** be realistic about your prospects of attaining those grades.

Criteria

The entrance criteria for the Sixth Form at Merchant Taylors' are as follows:

- We expect you to have worked hard and made a positive contribution throughout your time here. Your attitude must be one of wholehearted engagement with school life.
- We expect you to make sensible and informed choices as to what to study for the Sixth Form. These choices need to reflect your abilities and need to have been discussed with school staff, including your Tutor and relevant teachers/Heads of Department.
- As a principle, you will need to score at least an 8 grade at GCSE in order to study Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics or Physics.

- Since there is less continuity of material at A Level in other subjects, our principle is that you will need to score at least a 7 grade at GCSE to access other subjects.
- For new subjects, you should be expecting to score at least a 7 grade at GCSE in related disciplines as follows:
 - Economics: Maths and English
 - Philosophy: any Humanity subject
 - Politics: any Humanity subject
 - Psychology: any Humanity subject and Biology
- To be eligible for the Maths & Further Maths option, you will need to be in an accelerated set at GCSE, scoring a 9 grade and an A in FMSQ.
- Final approval of your A-level choices is at the discretion of the Head Master.

Parents' Evenings

In the first half of the Spring Term there are a series of Parents' Evenings; these serve a dual purpose. On one level, they allow boys and parents to talk to their subject teachers about the recent Fifth Form Assessments and to reflect upon what you could and should do next to progress still further. However, these meetings are also an opportunity to focus on the subjects that you might be considering taking forward for Sixth Form study. The subject teachers will, in most instances, be able to give a good idea as to whether you are suitable to study that subject in the Sixth Form. In some instances, they may wish to refer you to their Head of Department for further discussion.

The Parents' Evening is also a good opportunity to talk to your Tutors about any combinations of subjects that you may be considering. Tutors will have a very good idea of areas in which you excel and will also have a raft of professional experience, which will help guide you on which subjects work well with each other and how they can provide you with a number of routes to enter excellent universities.

The process

In November of the Fifths, we ask you to express a provisional interest in five subjects so Heads of Department give you feedback, via your Tutor, on your progress and the viability of your flourishing in those subjects. The Fifth Form Assessments provide further evidence in this regard. Once you have had discussions at February Parents' Evening, you will have a further conversation with your Tutor and give them your choice of four subjects for study in the Lower Sixth. Although not completely binding, these choices represent a serious commitment. We understand that a very few boys will change their minds between now and September, but we do expect you to make a careful decision now, so that we can draw up next year's timetable and agree a way forward which will allow you to flourish.

Similarly, we do not absolutely guarantee at this stage that the particular combination of subjects you choose will be available. We do our best to accommodate all choices, but it is not always practical to timetable a combination of subjects chosen by very few boys.

You need to have your choices decided by **Thursday 23rd February**. Your Tutor will then enter your choices into the system and we will spend the following few weeks looking to the viability of, and your suitability for, those choices, before confirming them with you at the start of the Summer Term.

If you, or your parents, have any questions or queries as to the process, then do please contact me.

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ART AND DESIGN

AQA

Introduction

A Level Art & Design offers a wonderful opportunity for those fascinated by the visual world to expand and develop their own work. There is ample opportunity for highly personal production, with an emphasis on self-motivation. The course is *far* more time-generous than GCSE, and as such affords much greater opportunity to experiment with new ways of working. It is an essential choice for those intending to produce a portfolio ready for a post A Level 'Art' or art-related application, Architecture for example. We also have boys who do not want to continue at university level, but want to show their creativity to prospective employers by taking A Level Art.

Rationale

The fundamental concern for the A Level programme is to instil a base of transferable skills appropriate to our Fine Art leaning, but which are also valuable within *any* artistic discipline, from fashion and textiles to Architecture, transport/graphic/product/gaming design (and indeed pupils have gone on to study all of these subject areas in recent years). Many students simply take the course to provide a complementing contrast to the typical approach of their other subject areas. Imagination, creativity, lateral thinking and invention are all prized assets of the artist – these skills are developed and encouraged through a demanding programme. Art History is threaded through the course to provide a rich source of reference - this is complemented by a range of study tours.

Contents

A Level Art is delivered as a two-year course, with the exams at the end of the second year. The first year adopts a Foundation Course approach, a series of taught 'workshops' to build your confidence and proficiency that will cover all the main aspects of technique and theory. This is then followed by an independent project in the second year. In all cases, students are required to direct their work in accordance with their personal motivations and enthusiasms - the learning will not be dictated. A range of techniques and processes are available and it is possible to offer a bespoke scheme for each student. The culminating Summer Show is a chance to exhibit the best of your work to an audience.

Degree Courses

Beyond the Sixth Form, artists have a vast number of options. All of the boys wanting to apply directly to university have been offered places based on their portfolios without having to attend a Foundation Course. Some boys do follow the Foundation path to help choose their specialty. The number of courses on offer is phenomenal and reflects the growth of an image conscious world – it is imperative that we have intelligent and talented people leading the way. Architecture provides a genuinely rich blend of the creative, visual, psychological and the mathematical; Walter Gropius, the founder of the influential art school the Bauhaus, described it as the most important discipline of all. Many leading architects consider Art to be the primary subject for potential architects – indeed studying Art and providing a portfolio is universally required for interview. Graphic Design, Illustration, Product Design, Gaming Design, and Fine Art have all been recent routes boys have selected. We do also have boys go on to read Physics, Geography, Economics, Advertising, and English and History at Oxford.

The unique environment of the Life Class provides a forum for serious and sophisticated young artists to engage with a long-established discipline.

Study of Art to this pre-degree level is a lifestyle choice and should be treated beyond the bounds of mere examination criteria.

GCSE Art & Design is a prerequisite for further study at A Level.

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COMPUTER SCIENCE

AQA

Computer Science is about logical thought and the application of intelligence. At A Level, students combine practical, creative and theoretical knowledge with the stimulus and satisfaction of making things work. It will suit boys who are considering A Level subjects such as Mathematics or Physics, but there is a creative aspect to the subject, which will appeal to those who enjoy practical and artistic activities. Computer Science is a valued qualification for a wide range of degree courses, particularly Mathematics, Science and Engineering, all areas in which the ability to solve problems and an understanding of computation is essential. It opens doors to a dynamic industry and equips pupils with the skills to master the modern world.

Learning to write and fix computer programs gives an insight into process and structure; as such it improves understanding in a range of subjects. Computer Science A Level teaches: strategies for solving problems such as breaking them into sub-problems; design; thinking at different levels (abstraction); and producing a program to automate a solution. As a fundamentally practical subject with a significant applied component, it tutors pupils in how to get things done and how to make things work.

The programming language of instruction is C# although pupils are free to use any language in their project.

The first year of the course includes:

- Problem Solving, Programming, Data Representation and practical programming.
Topics:
 - Problem solving
 - Programming: procedural, object-oriented and functional
 - Systems analysis
- Computer components, the stored program concept and the internet
Topics:
 - Numbers: binary, hexadecimal, fractions, negative numbers, characters
 - Boolean algebra
 - Hardware (low level such as CPU, memory and machine code; high level such as I/O and storage)
 - Software (system software such as operating systems; application software such as programming languages)
 - The internet, HTML and CSS
 - The consequences of computing (social and economic effects)
- In the first year, pupils start their practical project (which makes up 20% of the final A Level mark). This is completed in the second year. Choice of the project and development tools are up to the pupil. The project follows - and is an instruction in - formal methods of development and documentation. Sample topics for the project include:
 - a stock trading system, developing automated trading algorithms
 - a revision guide for the Apple iPhone
 - a maze-solving computer game
 - an aeroplane simulation demonstrating the principles of flight
 - a rugby team selection program (using the 'greedy algorithm')

The second year includes:

- Advanced Problem solving, programming, operating systems, databases and networks.
- Sample topics: Turing machines; syntax diagrams; object oriented programming (C#), networks.
- Conceptual and philosophical issues in Computer Science, such as complexity, intractability and Artificial Intelligence
- Legal, social and ethical implications of Computing
- Completion of the project building on the work from the first year

Computer Science is highly thought of as an A Level qualification. The specification has been developed in conjunction with universities and employers to meet their requirements. The subject closest to Computer Science is Mathematics since Computing was created largely by mathematicians and much of the content is most readily understood by those with good mathematical skills. There is nothing like trigonometry or calculus in Computer Science, but similar processes of logic and deduction are found throughout the subject, for example in manipulating numbers in different bases (binary and hexadecimal) and Boolean algebra.

One of the important outcomes of completing A Level Computer Science will be the ability to think computationally: to analyse and solve problems, produce algorithms, transfer problems to a computer, specify a computer system, and think logically. The subject involves approaches to knowledge and problems that are not found elsewhere.

It is helpful to have taken GCSE Computer Science as a preparation and it is expected that most pupils will have this background. Those who have not, but are nevertheless enthusiastic are encouraged to apply, and we will then discuss suitable preparations for the A Level. Prior interest in computing such as creating web pages or hobby programming is very useful.

Please see Mr Macleod for more details.

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DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Eduqas A Level Design and Technology: Product Design (A602QS)

The A Level course is made up of two assessed components: a written examination and an 'Independent Design and Make' project. In addition to assessed work, during the Lower Sixth, boys undertake short design and make challenges. Although they do not count towards the A Level itself, they do offer the boys a chance to really explore Design and Technology without the demands of having to produce a large assessed portfolio.

Who can take Design and Technology?

The course is particularly suited to boys who have studied GCSE Design & Technology. Minor projects undertaken in the first term give all students the chance to develop abilities in areas that extend their GCSE experience. The projects at A Level are truly independent and boys can choose to solve problems that interest them, making their project choices personal. Many boys also opt to deliver projects that are relevant to their University study, which is a good way to enhance UCAS applications.

Component One (Written examinations)

Boys undertake theory lessons regularly during the two year course and sit one written examination at the end of Upper Sixth. Boys will be required to apply their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of materials, including modern and smart materials, alongside processes used in commercial design and manufacture. Boys will be required to develop an understanding of contemporary industrial and commercial practices, and to appreciate the risks involved. Boys will also develop good working knowledge of health and safety procedures and relevant legislation relating to the subject. It is also worth noting that at least 15% of the examinations will be made up of applied mathematics questions.

Component Two - Independent Design and Make Projects

In addition to the smaller projects in the Lower Sixth, the NEA (coursework) element in the Upper Sixth is a substantial 'design, make and evaluate' project which will teach boys a range of higher order thinking skills and require them to design and make a fully working prototype. Boys will identify a user centred design possibility from which they will develop a range of potential solutions for and then realise one through practical making activities.

To conclude, A Level Design and Technology prepares boys for degree courses and careers in a wide range of Design and Engineering based disciplines. The use of industry standard Computer Aided Design and Manufacturing methods available at MTS, alongside the real world application of material manipulation, the application of Mathematics and Science to solve context-based design tasks in an iterative way, gives our boys a head start in the majority of University courses. As well as obvious links with Mathematics and Physics, there are also firm cross-curricular links with subjects such as Computing, Economics, Chemistry and Geography.

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DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES

AQA A Level Drama and Theatre Studies Course

Drama and Theatre Studies A Level encompasses a range of practical skills and theoretical knowledge of all aspects of the theatre. The course is designed to build theatrical creativity whilst developing performance and design skills alongside an analytical understanding.

The A Level course is made up of three units. Over the two years, these units offer a mix of coursework and exams, both practical and written. Candidates study plays from the point of view of a director, designer, performer and critic. The A Level requires students to work closely with their peers, to be imaginative and creative, intellectual and skilled.

The first unit (40%) involves a study of two stimulating set plays and an analysis of the work of live theatre makers, assessed in the form of a written examination. As part of this unit, students have the opportunity to see a range of productions in the West End and to participate in theatre workshops with professional practitioners and companies.

In the second unit (30%), candidates create a piece of original devised drama influenced by the work and methodologies of one prescribed practitioner, assessed via a devised performance and written notebook.

The third unit (30%) is a practical exploration, interpretation and performance of three extracts, each taken from a different play with the methodology of a prescribed practitioner applied to one of the extracts. A reflective report evaluating the theatrical interpretation accompanies the practical performances.

Further Education

Candidates who take A Level Drama and Theatre Studies go on to study a wide variety of subjects at a range of Russell Group universities, from Law at Bristol University, to Geography and History at King's College, London, and French and Spanish at Exeter University. Another read Medicine at Imperial University. The course is highly valued by employers because of the transferable skills students gain: communication, social awareness, empathy, critical thinking and problem solving are areas of particular focus. The A Level is also obviously eminently suitable for those students wishing to study English and Drama at University and beyond. Many OMTs have had very successful careers in the theatre, media and film including Nigel Lindsay and Riz Ahmed.

C L Clarke

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ECONOMICS

Edexcel Economics A

Economics is the branch of knowledge concerned with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth. It analyses how a society should allocate its scarce resources to maximize its citizens' welfare. For instance:

- Why do some nations grow faster than others?
- What determines the living standards in different nations?
- How has leaving the European Union impacted the UK economy?
- Should the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee continue increase interest rates to tackle inflation?
- Is free trade between nations always beneficial?
- Will the UK's current deficit and national debt have implications for the future of the UK economy?

Studying Economics improves your ability to reason logically, and to analyse data. Graphs and diagrams are frequently used as an aid to reasoning, and you need to be able to perform simple mathematical operations, such as calculating a percentage change. This means that mathematical competence is a considerable advantage. Although students can do well in A Level Economics without it, **an A* in A Level Mathematics is an essential requirement for many Economics degree courses**. If you think you might wish to study Economics at university, we strongly recommend taking A Level Mathematics too.

Economics is a good bridging subject between the arts, the social sciences and pure science. It fits particularly well with Mathematics, Physics, History, Geography and Politics. Linguists also choose it quite often, especially if they have a business career in mind. Graduate economists are in high demand by employers of all sorts.

If you decide to take A Level Economics at Merchant Taylors', you will follow the Edexcel Economics (A) Specification. This will enable you to develop a rigorous and critical understanding of economic theory and to master various analytical tools. Although there is no coursework requirement, the inclusion of economic history topics gives you the opportunity to improve your independent research skills. For instance, the course includes a comparison between the 2008 financial crisis and the Great Depression of the 1930's. In addition, the A Level specification places a great emphasis on the banking sector and provides a thorough understanding of the role of the City of London.

More detailed information will be available at the time of the subject briefing. However, if you would like to find out more, you could ask a current Sixth Former or attend talks organised by the Alfred Marshall Political Economy Society.

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ENGLISH

OCR and AQA

The English Department at MTS offers two A Level English courses and it is worth remembering that you can choose **both** as A Level options:

- A Level English Literature (OCR Exam Board)
- A Level English Language (AQA Exam Board)

One of the most traditional and sought-after A Levels, **English Literature** widens immeasurably the scope of literature that you will have studied at GCSE. You will be given an in-depth training in critical analysis and written communication and an unequalled insight into the human psyche – exactly what the modern workplace is looking for in new graduates. The depth in which you explore your A Level texts is unprecedented and they will stay with you for life. Another richly satisfying aspect of the course is the way that it explores the historical and social contexts behind works of literature, as well as the way that interpretations of a text have evolved over time.

We start with Shakespeare and an in-depth study of *Richard III*, a play which, if you believe Shakespeare, explores one of the most notorious, Machiavellian – and magnetic – villains in history. The breadth of literature you will cover is impressive. As part of the pre-1800 side of the course, you may study Geoffrey Chaucer's 14th Century human comedy, *The Canterbury Tales*, alongside Oliver Goldsmith's clever satire on 18th Century manners in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Alternatively, you might find yourself studying Milton's visionary epic, *Paradise Lost*, twinned with the blood and revenge of Webster's Jacobean tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*. We then head into post-20th Century texts for coursework, with past choices including the poetry of W.B. Yeats, W.H. Auden, D. H. Lawrence, Philip Larkin, Seamus Heaney and Simon Armitage; prose that covers writers such as Martin Amis, Kazuo Ishiguro, J.M. Coetzee and John le Carré; and plays that might include Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, Laura's Wade's *Posh*, Tom Stoppard's absurdist comedy, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and Jez Butterworth's defiant state-of-the-nation play, *Jerusalem*. You have a genuine say in what you would like to study for coursework.

On the other side of the course, you will study a whole module devoted to American Literature written between 1880 and 1940. The period spans America's emergence from civil war and the years of formative development as a nation. The seminal texts you get to study are Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, an exquisitely written meditation on the destructive effects of The American Dream in the 1920s, and John Steinbeck's finest work, *The Grapes of Wrath*, an angry polemic on the impact of privatization and unchecked Capitalism on poor migrant farmers in the 1930s. Surrounding these two core novels are a number of satellite texts, written by some of the greats of American Literature: Mark Twain, Henry James, Edith Wharton, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Richard Wright, Theodore Dreiser and Willa Cather. Together, these writers form a body of work that encompasses the main discourses that still run through American society today: the tensions between the northern and southern states, racial and gender inequality, wealth and poverty, America's ambivalent relationship with Europe and the forging of its own identity as a nation state.

Allied to the course is a rich cultural programme of theatre visits, academic lectures from some of the top professors in the country and the weekly meeting of the English Literature Society, named after OMT Robert Herrick, the 17th Century metaphysical poet. Here you will be introduced to writers, texts and ideas (some highly controversial in their time) that both support and go far beyond the syllabus. Be sure to check out the new *MTS English Reading Companion*, which guides you

through the most important writers, texts and literary movements of the English Canon, and includes commentary from each member of the department on their specialist areas. You will find copies, accompanied by the recommended texts, in the new Sixth Form English Reading Room, a space dedicated to independent study and scholarship.

English Language is a popular, diverse and interesting course and it doesn't really bear any relation to GCSE at all. English Language seeks to explore many questions: is it possible to think without language? Does our gender influence our language choices? Do the limits of our language dictate the limits of our world? In many ways this is a linguistics course and adopts a scientific approach to studying language – so, if you are technically-minded, or wish to study a modern or classical language, or have an interest in Biology, Psychology or the social sciences, then English Language is an excellent complement to those A Levels. You will learn about language development in children, interrogate the relationship between language and culture and explore the politics of language. The course opens your mind to the range of texts that surround us, from Trump's tweets to Stormzy's lyrics to fascinating discourses on language from theorists like Althusser, Barthes and David Crystal. A good deal of what is done in this course is linguistic analysis of both spoken and written texts, at times chosen by you. You will also produce a piece of original writing coursework and an individual research project on a topic of your choosing. Previous projects have considered subjects as wide-ranging as Apple Technology's advertising ideology, the language of violence in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* and the language of courtship in *Geordie Shore*. An A Level in English Language has enabled previous students to go on to take degree courses in Linguistics, English Literature, Medicine, Classics and Russian; they have welcomed the intellectual rigour the subject affords.

University Application

The English Department at MTS has a proud history of seeing boys in the Sixth Form go on to study English each year at either Oxford or Cambridge or at top Russell Group universities such as York, Durham, Exeter, Warwick, UCL and Bristol. From January of the L6th, boys considering reading English at university are invited to join the English Extension Class. This weekly lesson begins to emulate undergraduate study and goes on to prepare boys for university applications, including the Oxbridge ELAT exam and interview. We have considerable in-house expertise in this area, notably Dr. Hetherington who was for several years a member of the St John's College Oxford Admissions team for English Literature.

English is also a highly desirable A Level for those wishing to read Law, Philosophy, History, PPE, Modern Languages or Classics, and it has proven to have been a possible discriminator in deciding the outcome of some medical applications.

Common Factors

Universities rate both English Literature and English Language as being enabling subjects, those that are credited as excellent preparation for a wide range of degree courses and careers. For either course, essay work will be the principal form of assessment, in which you will be asked to show a detailed critical understanding of the texts. Lessons take place in seminar environments, anticipating those of Higher Education, in which independence of mind and liveliness of expression are key qualities - as is an appetite for reading wonderful literature and a wide range of stimulating texts. Simply speak any of the teachers in the English Department if you would like to know more, and feel free to drop by my classroom if you wish to discuss your thoughts further.

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EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION (EPQ)

AQA

The EPQ is a stand-alone qualification that has the 'value' of half an A Level. It is a free-standing project which a student conducts on a topic of their choosing with final submission in the Autumn Term or Spring Term of the Upper Sixth. It runs alongside other subjects and does not have to be based in a subject studied in the Sixth Form. Most projects are influenced by university or career intentions and the EPQ can be an excellent way of showing interest in areas in which boys wish to study or work.

The EPQ comprises six elements:

1. Choosing an area of interest
2. Drafting a project title
3. Drafting aims of the Project
4. Planning, researching and carrying out the project
5. Providing evidence at all stages of the project production
6. Delivering a presentation to a 'lay' audience

The project could be in the form of an academic essay, an investigation or might be more practical – perhaps an art exhibition, a film or a practical engineering project.

The outcome is either an essay of approximately 5,000 words or the submission of an 'artefact' with a 1,500-word report. Students complete a Production Log throughout the process with a focus on reflection and self-evaluation. It is assessed internally and moderated externally, with grades being awarded at the end. Boys are supervised by a teacher in school who gives guidance and advice, but does not 'teach' the content of the project. The emphasis is on independent research.

Timetable

Boys will be briefed about the project in the Autumn Term of their Lower Sixth year. Project titles are finalised and initial planning starts in January of the Lower Sixth, with research and writing occupying the spring and summer terms. Pupils will complete the written or artefact components by the end of the summer holiday. Presentations on the boys' research and the project itself will take place early in the Autumn Term of the Upper Sixth year and final submissions made soon afterwards. Good projects can be discussed in UCAS references and university interviews. Increasing numbers of universities are making alternative (reduced) offers to students who submit successful EPQs.

Boys will opt into the project on a voluntary basis but the School reserves the right to refuse a student entry to the project if we believe that it is not in the best interests of the student to add to their workload.

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GEOGRAPHY

AQA

Geography A Level deals with concepts that are vital to an understanding of today's world. As a reconstructivist discipline, which aims to solve the world's current and future problems, geography is the only subject that explores the relationship between people and their physical environment. Geography is also an excellent bridge between Art and Science subjects. The transferable nature of geographic skills provides a useful support for both Arts and science subjects and students enjoy sharing geographic knowledge, understanding and skill with their other subjects. We teach the AQA specification, which provides an in-depth study of geographical issues in a modern context and will allow you to appreciate your role as a global citizen whilst developing your understanding of different cultures, economies and environments. The teaching in the department is of the highest quality, with a wide range of expertise amongst our staff. Our teaching is facilitated by the Edward Evans Geography building includes a host of new technologies and facilities for students, including VR headsets and a Sixth Form study area. An active student-led Senior Geography Society allows students to engage in academic geography beyond the A Level course by attending lectures and giving their own presentations. As a result there has never been a better time to continue with the subject at A Level.

Each year between ten and fifteen geographers continue with the subject to degree level, along with regular success at Oxbridge. Employers actively seek out Geography graduates because they are analytical, computer literate, systematic and aware of the inter-relationships between different concepts and ideas. Together with the obvious careers that stem directly from the subject itself, many Geography graduates go on to careers in law, accountancy, consultancy, financial services, advertising and politics. Geography has been defined amongst the key 'facilitating' subjects in a guide compiled by the Russell Group (20 leading UK universities), together with being identified as one of 10 'recession-proof' degree subjects.

The A Level is different in feel from the GCSE. There is a greater expectation for independent work and wider reading, and there is a lot more time to cover the content and exam technique in depth. As such, lessons are more discursive and all students will be expected to involve themselves in class debate. The fieldwork & coursework component (20% of the total mark) also gives students the chance to take ownership of their work, investigating something interesting to them. This fieldwork has been especially helpful for our current UCAS applicants in terms of their confidence in carrying out original research in the same style as that which they would go on to do at university.

Course Content

Component One is entitled Physical Geography and is broken down into three sections: **Water and Carbon Cycles** focuses on the major stores of water and carbon at or near the Earth's surface and the dynamic cyclical relationships associated with them. These are major elements in the natural environment and understanding them is fundamental to many aspects of physical geography. **Coastal Systems and Landscapes** focuses on these dynamic environments in which landscapes develop by the interaction of winds, waves, currents and terrestrial and marine sediments together with human intervention in these landscapes. **Hazards** focuses on the lithosphere and atmosphere, which intermittently but regularly present hazards to human populations, often in dramatic and sometimes catastrophic fashion. This component comprises 40% of the course.

Component Two is entitled Human Geography and is also divided into three sections: **Global Systems and Global Governance** focuses on globalisation – the economic, political and social changes associated with technological and other driving forces which have been a key feature of global economy and society in recent decades, together with the attempts at a global level to manage and govern some aspects of human affairs. This section includes a consideration of the threats to and protection of Antarctica. **Changing Places** focuses on people’s engagement with places, their experiences of them and the qualities they ascribe to them, which are of fundamental importance in their lives. As part of this section, the developing character of a location close to home and a contrasting distant place is considered. **Resource Security** focuses on the large scale exploitation of unevenly distributed natural resources, which is one of the defining features of the present era. You will explore how supply and demand for water, energy, and minerals leads to conflict, wealth, and issues of sustainability at varying scales. This component also comprises 40% of the course.

Component Three is an assessed geographical investigation of 3,000 to 4,000 words in relation to processes in both physical and human geography. The independent investigation, based on a hypothesis, incorporates evidence from field investigations and research and requires analysis of this data and conclusions to be reached. This unit will be an excellent way to develop the research skills necessary for your undergraduate studies at university and comprises 20% of the course. This component takes place in lessons over about one term in total with one of your teachers, and requires a mature approach to be completed effectively.

Fieldwork and Expeditions

There is a compulsory fieldwork course during the Lower Sixth, the cost for which is approximately £300. This fieldwork directly supports the course work of Component 3. Our current destinations include a day trip to the cultural hub of Shoreditch to investigate changing urban place, and a two night residential to Swanage Bay to investigate coastal landforms. We will also be offering an optional expedition, designed to inspire geographical interest and aid understanding of key elements of the course. The location for this is undecided as yet and we are always open to ideas.

Please come and see me if you would like a copy of the course outline, or if you have any queries about Geography A Level.

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HISTORY

OCR

Why study History beyond GCSE?

History is an unashamedly academic subject, which also lends itself to students of a broad ability range. It is accessible through the intrigue of the historical periods studied but challenging in the skills required to analyse and evaluate concepts. It is this combination which has led Cambridge University to declare that they see History as one of the four ideal A Level subjects they look for in a humanities applicant. History graduates have been successful not only in conventional occupations, such as teaching and journalism, but also in some which might seem more unlikely, such as business, finance, and law. History in the Sixth Form introduces its students to transferable skills that make them well-equipped to pursue a multiplicity of careers and to do so with great success.

What is A Level History?

A Level History offers opportunities to explore a range of periods and regions in the past, emphasising breadth as well as depth of teaching and learning. The syllabus encourages historical debate and discussion. Students are rewarded for offering informed, independent views, which result from genuine engagement with the study of History. A Level History is also seen to be excellent preparation for university by the universities.

What is the A Level course structure?

We have chosen a syllabus which we feel will excite and engage Merchant Taylors' students. Students will be able to move away from the well-trodden path of twentieth century Europe and embrace a broader range of periods. The A Level course is broken up into three papers (sat at the end of the Upper Sixth) and a Topic based essay.

British period study and enquiry - England 1199—1272

Students will explore the history of Britain from the end of Henry II's reign through to the accession of Edward I. There will be a particular emphasis on the reigns of Richard the Lionheart, John, and Henry III. This paper explores the role of kingship and the development of parliament, in an exciting period of both conflict and cooperation. A medieval monarch was required to be both a warrior and judge; some got it horribly wrong.

Thematic study and historical interpretations - Civil Rights in the USA 1865—1992

An introduction to the modern history of the United States that offers students the opportunity to explore the internal and external forces that have shaped its domestic politics, economy, and society, from the end of the Civil War to the present day. Major themes and topics include: the concept of positive and negative liberty; changing understandings of rights; the changing structure and role of the federal government in the economic and social lives of its citizens and competing ideas of American exceptionalism. By the end of the course, students will have studied a hundred years of American history and will engage with recent historiographical treatment and controversies, many of which persist and continue to animate historical research to this day.

Non-British period study - The Crusades and the crusader states 1095—1192

Students will use primary sources to develop an in depth understanding of the first three Crusades: a truly exciting and relevant period of medieval History.

Topic based essay

The Topic based essay is an extended essay of 3500 - 4000 words, based on a research investigation by the candidate. It enables students to pursue a topic which engages their interests and imagination.

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LATIN AND GREEK

OCR

Outline

The A Levels in Latin and Greek continue along similar lines to the GCSE: half of the qualification is language, the other half is literature. The format of the Latin A Level and the Greek A Level are the same, and so they are described together here. However, you can choose to study one or the other, although some boys choose to study both.

Content

Lower Sixth

In both subjects, the Lower Sixth will be spent consolidating understanding of accidence and syntax (ie endings and constructions), most of which has been covered at GCSE. Some translation of English into Latin/Greek will be done, and plenty of translation of Latin/Greek into English.

In preparation for the study of A Level texts, a variety of authors – both prose and verse – will be read in the first term of Lower Sixth. In Latin, these will include Catullus, Horace, and Virgil in verse, and Cicero, Suetonius, and Petronius in prose. In Greek, these will include Homer, tragedy, and comedy in verse, and Plato, Thucydides, and Xenophon in prose. This term will provide an excellent overview of Classical literature and genre, and an excellent preparation for the study of A Level texts.

Upper Sixth

There is a choice of A Level texts, and the decision about which to study will be made closer to the time of the exams.

In Latin, the prose authors offered for examination in 2025 are Cicero, Tacitus, and Pliny, and the verse authors are Virgil, Ovid, and Juvenal. It is likely that two prose texts and two verse texts will be studied.

In Greek, the prose authors offered for examination in 2025 are Herodotus, Plato, and Plutarch, and the verse authors are Homer, Euripides, and Aristophanes. It is likely that two prose texts and two verse texts will be studied.

The language papers involve a combination of translation and comprehension, with optional translation of English into Latin/Greek.

Who can do it?

Those who enjoy GCSE invariably enjoy A Level: the skills required and the nature of the courses are similar, but more advanced. The GCSEs in Latin and Greek are tough, and as a result are a good preparation for A Level; after all, you have already faced the challenges of Virgil and Homer in the Fifth Form. This means that any pupil who has coped well at GCSE, and indeed who has enjoyed it, will be in a very healthy position to do well at A Level. There is little in the way of new language to

be learned: most of the grammar required for reading Latin and Greek has been covered during the GCSE, and so much of the language work at A Level involves consolidation.

Beyond the classroom

An overseas trip is offered in most years. In addition, pupils recently have attended plays in Oxford, Cambridge, and London. The department has an enviable library of Classics books, which will enhance independent study at this level, and lectures by distinguished academics will convey something of what is involved in studying Classics at undergraduate level.

Beyond A Level

Both Latin and Greek are regarded as highly academic subjects, and are recognized by the Russell Group of universities as 'facilitating subjects'. They are valued because of both the intellectual concentration and application that is demanded in translation, and the close reading and interpretation of text that is required in literary analysis. Some boys choose to study Classics at university, but by no means all: many will go on to read other humanities, or sciences, and the grounding offered by Latin and Greek is well appreciated by university admissions tutors.

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MATHEMATICS

OCR MEI

Mathematics is a very popular subject for A Level study at Merchant Taylors'. It can be, and is studied successfully in combination with almost anything else. A good grade in A Level Mathematics is regarded as a desirable qualification by all higher education establishments.

Mathematics now follows the new linear A Level syllabus which started in September 2017. The course is divided into two: Pure and Applied Mathematics, with the emphasis on Pure. Pure Mathematics is in many ways a continuation of the Middle School courses and includes algebra, trigonometry, numerical methods and calculus. Applied Mathematics is itself divided into two parts, Statistics and Mechanics.

Aptitude for the course, as well as a genuine interest, is obviously very important in Mathematics. The extent to which one can compensate by sheer effort for difficulties in understanding is limited. Those who have not studied any FSMQ syllabus must be cautious in opting for Mathematics at A Level; **anyone scoring below a grade of 9 at IGCSE is likely to find the course extremely difficult.**

Assessment for the Mathematics A Level consists of three 2 hour papers (all carrying the same weighting) taken in the summer of the U6th year. There is no coursework anywhere in A Level Mathematics.

Those wishing to consider Mathematics and Further Mathematics need to read on.

The Further Mathematics course includes further modules in Pure, Statistics, Mechanics and Numerical Methods.

In order to study Further Mathematics at Merchant Taylors in the sixth form, you must be in a set studying the FSMQ course. Given the accelerated manner that A Level Mathematics is studied in the first term of the Lower Sixth, pupils cannot choose to study Further Maths A Level if they are not studying FSMQ in the Fifth form.

For Mathematics, Engineering, Economics, Natural Sciences and other Mathematics based courses showing that you are capable of doing more advanced Mathematics (provided one is good enough to do this) is regarded as being beneficial – universities like to see evidence of extended work being done. The top universities will *expect* candidates to have done this coming from a school such as Merchant Taylors'.

It is important that boys do some early research into potential university courses to ensure that their choice of Maths A Level suits their applications.

If you are seriously interested in studying Mathematics and Further Mathematics please select the '**Further Mathematics**' option – though this will be reviewed in the light of IGCSE and FSMQ results and again after the first term of Lower Sixth.

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MODERN LANGUAGES
FRENCH, GERMAN, SPANISH
WJEC/Eduqas A Level

Why study Modern Languages beyond IGCSE?

As a successful IGCSE linguist you will already have experienced, at some level, the real pleasure and buzz in being able to communicate in a foreign language. Speaking and understanding a language gives you a unique set of tools that can be applied to many fields of employment and future learning. Anyone with an interest in communication, film, literature, economics, politics, history and sciences will find the Sixth Form courses engaging, and you can be certain that by the end of the Sixth Form, you will have reached a degree of independent fluency which will surprise you. That is richly satisfying in its own right, but more than that, high-level modern linguists are currently among the most employable of all graduates and Modern Languages have one of the most favourable applicants to places ratios at Russell Group universities. Furthermore, those students likely to pursue scientific careers often value (as do their eventual employers) the balance and different perspective offered by a language qualification. While one modern language is often chosen as a complement to other subjects, able linguists should strongly consider the value of taking two languages.

What is the A Level course structure?

The course will be taught by two teachers who will develop the main language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing and translating) by means of authentic materials and media, covering topic areas such as cultural identity and diversity relevant to the language studied, recent historical and political events, artistic heritage and the contemporary cultural scene, traditions and festivals. Pupils also study a set film and a set text, one in L6th and one in U6th. In addition, we have the benefit of native speaker assistants with whom you will work in small groups to get individualised help and conversation practice.

Examination structure:

Paper 1 *Speaking (16 minutes + 5 minutes preparation)*

Candidates discuss a short article related to the culture or country and matters arising from it. In the second part of this paper, candidates discuss a prepared topic of their choice related to where the target language is spoken. This is an opportunity for pupils to research a particular area of personal interest – it could be historical, political, cultural, sporting or a contemporary issue but it must be relevant to the culture/language studied.

Paper 2 *Reading, Listening and Translation*

Candidates answer comprehension questions in both the target language and in English in response to audio and written material. They are also required to translate a passage from the target language into English and vice versa. Unlike at GCSE, candidates have access to their own sound files but have to manage their time accordingly.

Paper 3 *Writing response to film and work of literature*

In this paper, candidates write two short essays (300 words approx.) in the target language in response to a film and a work of literature they have studied in class. The list of films and literary

works includes classics and more contemporary works. To get an idea, please see the A Level specifications on the Eduqas website for language-specific films and texts.

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/>

- Language classes in the Sixth Form are fun. An active engagement with and enjoyment of your language is a necessity, but working with like-minded pupils, teachers and language assistants, provides rapid progress and much satisfaction.
- In class, the 'target language' is used predominantly and confidence in speaking is reinforced by a compulsory weekly session in small groups with one of the language assistants. Discussion in a foreign language is also practised in class and on occasion in debating competitions with other schools.
- We place a lot of emphasis on independent research, reading and exploration. This begins in January of the Lower Sixth with a regular 'reading and listening booklet' in which we expect students to record evidence of a piece of reading or listening every week.
- There is an active Sixth Form Language Society, *Panglossia*, which invites eminent university academics to talk about all the countries we study, and to which you're warmly welcome.
- Progress can and should be reinforced by spending time in a country where the language being studied is spoken on study trips we organise, individual exchanges, work experience or simply on holiday. Within the department we have several contacts for potential independent exchanges and we would strongly encourage Sixth Formers to consider this opportunity.

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MUSIC

OCR

Introduction

A Level Music provides a contemporary, accessible and creative education in Music with an integrated approach to the three main elements of Performing, Composing and Appraising. The course is designed to encourage creativity, and to broaden students' musical horizons and understanding with Areas of Study (below) that inspire and challenge:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Instrumental music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven | [compulsory - studied in L6] |
| 2. Popular song: Blues, jazz, swing and big band | [compulsory - studied in L6] |
| 3. Instrumental jazz from 1910 to the present day | [optional - studied in U6] |
| 4. Religious music of the Baroque Period | [optional - studied in U6] |
| 5. Programme music 1820-1910 | [optional - studied in U6] |
| 6. Innovations in music from 1900 to the present day | [optional - studied in U6] |

With an emphasis on musicality and practical music making, it is a course suited to those who are already good instrumentalists or singers, who can read music fluently, and who have a real interest in the history, analysis and techniques of music. The ABRSM Grade 5 Theory qualification is a prerequisite for studying A Level Music.

The Course

A Level Music is delivered as a two year course comprising a coursework element (Composing), a Recital (Performing), and a written paper at the end of the second year (Appraising). In the first year there is ample opportunity to explore performance and composition in detail, with scope for specialising in *either* performance *or* composition according to each student's own particular strengths and interests.

Performing

For Performing pupils submit a filmed recital that lasts between 6 and 9 minutes, or, if Performing is selected as the specialist component, between 12 and 15 minutes. The recital will be recorded between March and May during the second year of the course.

Standard performing:	75 marks	25% of the total A Level
Specialism in performing:	105 marks	35% of the total A Level

Composing

For Composing pupils submit two compositions that are completed across the two years and submitted in the second year. If Composing is selected as the specialist component, an additional set of three exercises is also submitted.

Standard composing:	75 marks	25% of the total A Level
Specialism in composing:	105 marks	35% of the total A Level

Together the Performing and Composing components account for 60% of the total A Level overall.

Appraising

Your listening, appraising, and analytical skills are assessed in a written paper at the end of the course. The Areas of Study offer the opportunity to explore the musical context, the musical language, and the interdependence of the musical elements in a range of musical styles and genres. You will study four in total.

The first two Areas of Study are compulsory, and include prescribed works.

2022-2024 prescribed works:

AOS1: Haydn: Symphony No. 103 in E flat major, 'Drum Roll' (1795), first and second movements

AOS2: Cécile McLorin Salvant: For One To Love (2015): (i) 'Wives And Lovers', (ii) 'The Trolley Song', (iii) 'What's The Matter Now?', (iv) 'Le Mal De Vivre'

A further two of the remaining four Areas of Study will also be studied during the course, and will provide the basis for assessment in the form of essays in the written paper.

Written Paper: 120 marks 40% of the total A Level 2 ½ Hours

Beyond the Sixth Form

A Level Music is a must for anyone intending to study Music seriously, either at a music college or university, but it is not a subject that is limited to those intending to pursue a career in music. Opting to study Music at A Level can demonstrate a commendably broad and enterprising mind when it comes to university application, and provides a welcome opportunity for personal expression and creativity, as well as deepening the understanding and enjoyment of a lifelong interest. It is true that in recent years many A Level Music students have gone on to read Music at Oxford or Cambridge, though there are others who have chosen to use their musically developed skills as independent and creative thinkers, with abilities to also work as part of a team in high pressure situations, in their studies for Engineering, History, Law, Languages, and Zoology degrees.

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PHILOSOPHY

Epistemology, Moral Philosophy, Metaphysics of God and Metaphysics of Mind AQA (specification 7172)

Philosophy underpins everything we think we know, strive to know, and do. Any and all subjects that you may choose to study at A Level started out as a field of philosophical investigation. By definition, philosophy is a 'love of wisdom', and that is precisely what students gain by studying this course. Quite simply, "You cannot do without philosophy; for everything has its hidden meaning, which we must know" (Maxim Gorky).

An increasingly popular course nationally, A Level Philosophy covers four key ideas of Western philosophy in great depth. Much like A Level Religious Studies, the course requires no specific former knowledge and can be studied by anyone with an enquiring and critical mind. It particularly appeals to students who have an interest in challenging conceptual thought, have a capacity for analytical thinking, and enjoy a good debate. However, unlike A Level Religious Studies, the nature of A Level Philosophy assessments entails a greater degree of analytic rigour and precision. It also provides the opportunity to delve deeper into some of humanity's most basic assumptions, including whether we are real, and whether we can know anything at all. Philosophy students therefore have an exceptionally open mind and well-developed patience when grappling with seemingly impossible problems.

This course has **four** equally weighted units, all of which will be examined at the end of a two-year course based upon AQA specification 7172. These units are assessed during two three-hour unseen exams whereby students answer both short and longer (essay-style) questions.

UNIT 1: EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is the study of theories of knowledge. This unit covers the definition of knowledge, what we can know, and how we acquire knowledge and concepts. It even challenges everything you thought you knew by considering the concept of radical philosophical scepticism – perhaps this world is that of a simulation, perhaps we are simply brains in vats, and perhaps we cannot ever really claim to know anything at all. Think the Truman Show, The Matrix, Inception...

UNIT 2: MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Moral philosophy is often referred to as ethics. Put simply, it's about right and wrong, good and bad. This unit covers ethical theories, applications of these theories, and the meaning of moral language. Questions posed and views examined help students better understand what it means to be a good person, or to do good things. In fact, students even question whether there is any such thing as morality at all, and if not, what the consequences of this may be.

UNIT 3: METAPHYSICS OF GOD

This unit covers the Abrahamic concept of God as typically conceived by the three main monotheistic religions. It considers whether this concept of a God is logical or indeed possible, as well as arguments for and against the existence of God. Can we even talk about such a God if He does exist, and what are the consequences of our inability to comprehend a God with such characteristics?

UNIT 4: METAPHYSICS OF MIND

This Metaphysics of Mind unit considers key questions in the field of Philosophy of Mind. This involves examining what minds and mental states are, as well as whether they can be separated from the body. This unit covers various theories which argue that the mind is either a physical or a non-physical entity, with resultant issues around what makes us human and what it means to experience being human.

How would this course benefit you?

Philosophy is highly regarded by top universities because it develops a range of skills, quite unlike any other A Level course. Russell Group universities value the subject highly, as it provides good general preparation for university study.

People are often surprised to hear that many students who are looking to embark in a career in medicine, science or law find a background in philosophy an invaluable asset. Yet, this is hardly surprising given the nature of the topics at hand. After all, how can you be a good doctor if you have not grappled with the value of human life, and how can you be a good lawyer if you have not questioned the source of morality and the value of law? In fact, the vast majority of Nobel Prize winning scientists have studied philosophy or other related humanities along the way. Put simply, a philosophical mind makes for a more critical, diverse and ultimately successful scientific mind. It's no surprise, therefore, that Philosophy is a popular joint-honours degree subject alongside Physics or Mathematics, as well as a popular undergraduate degree choice for those wishing to pursue law via a law conversion.

Outside the world of work, philosophy provides a unique opportunity to think through the biggest of questions, including whether God exists, whether there is such a thing as morality, and what the meaning of life itself is (or indeed, if there is one at all). No other subject wrestles with such fundamental questions and gets to the very core of what it is to be human; to think. The Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates famously said "*The unexamined life is not worth living*"; if you are inclined to agree, then this is the course for you.

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POLITICS

Edexcel

Why study A Level Politics?

Politics is both endlessly fascinating and unbelievably important. Post-pandemic, none of us can ever claim that it doesn't affect us. By studying the subject for A Level, you will understand the theory of how government is supposed to work, as well as the theory behind how we get the governments we deserve. Politics can take you from high debate on principle to appreciating the absurdity of the Westminster bubble within the same lesson, and there is endless scope for discussion and debate. You will look at social issues which affect you, including the intersection between feminism and the men's rights movement and you will be encouraged to look at drama and satire that helps you to understand the wider implications of the course material.

Am I suited to the subject?

Politics is for anyone who loves a good debate, who can write with precision, who is prepared to stay up to date with developments as they happen and for anyone who wants to understand more about how decisions are made in the UK and the USA. If you can analyse material in front of you and take a robust approach to the trustworthiness of a source, if you can make sure you have a recent example of a principle in action and if you love to look at theory, philosophy and practical information, then you are in the right place.

People who do well at politics are fascinated by the concept of truth to power, they read and watch a lot of up to date debate and want to understand the most pressing issues of the day.

What will I learn?

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
<p>UK Politics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Democracy and Participation• Pressure Groups• Political Parties• Elections and Electoral Systems• Voting Behaviour and the media <p>Core Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liberalism• Conservatism• Socialism	<p>UK Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Constitution• Parliament• The Prime Minister and Cabinet• The Judiciary and Civil Liberties <p>Non-Core Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feminism	<p>Comparative American Politics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The US Constitution and federalism• US Congress• US presidency• US Supreme Court and US civil rights• US democracy and participation (incl. elections)• Comparative theories

Where will it lead?

Politics at A Level is a great gateway subject opening up dozens of different fields at university, as well as being ideal preparation for subjects such as Politics, International Relations, Economics, Business, History, History and Politics, PPE and HSPS.

Extra-curricular involvement:

- Alfred Marshall Society talks and visiting speakers (recent speakers at MTS include Gordon Brown, Sir Nick Clegg, David Gauke MP, Lord Stirrup, Richard Harrington MP and John Randall)
- A termly Department magazine, The Backbench
- An annual trip to Parliament, the UK Supreme Court and City Hall
- Trips abroad (recent and planned trips include Israel and Palestine, USA and France)
- Model United Nations conferences (including MTS MUN)
- Online lectures and talks (in person where possible)
- An annual visit to the Women of the World festival
- The chance to lead the Hansard Society, a junior politics group and magazine for the lower school

A Level specification link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.html>

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PSYCHOLOGY

AQA

What is Psychology A Level?

Psychology is the scientific study of mind and behaviour. It is a fascinating and rigorous A level which deals with questions such as: What makes us remember? How do we learn? Following brain damage how well can a person perform? Why do people obey? One of the ways it is a truly unique and valuable subject is that you will learn a great deal about the brain, including its regions and functions, and about predominant mental illnesses in society such as depression and anxiety.

Course outline

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology

- Social Influence: why people conform, why people obey and the effects of these processes on social change
- Memory: including memory models and eyewitness testimony
- Attachment: including early social development, explanations of attachment and cultural variations of child-rearing
- Psychopathology: different approaches to treating depression, phobias and obsessive compulsive disorder

Unit 2: Psychology in Context

- Approaches in Psychology: different ways of understanding behaviour, including Learning, Cognitive, Biological, Psychodynamic and Humanistic
- Biopsychology: how understanding human biology helps to understand behaviour
- Research Methods: a comprehensive focus on how psychologists construct studies, gather data and analyse results

Unit 3: Issues and Options in Psychology

- Issues and Debates in Psychology: the kinds of debates that psychologists have with each other including, Gender, Free Will and Determinism, Nature and Nurture, Holism and Reductionism, Idiographic and Nomothetic investigating and Ethics.
- Cognition and Development: focuses on infant intellectual stages of development and how this can help us to understand autism.
- Schizophrenia: focuses on the condition, its causes and how it is treated.
- Aggression: why human beings are aggressive, including biological and social reasons.

Assessment

UNIT	Maximum mark	Length of paper
Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology	96	2 hours
Paper 2: Psychology in Context	96	2 hours
Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology	96	2 hours

Skills and Interests Required

Psychology involves a great deal of knowledge acquisition. Be prepared to learn and revise key terms. Students are expected to be good at writing and willing to keep their notes organised. Focus is placed upon analysis, evaluation, interpretation, ethical issues and critical appreciation of psychological methodologies.

A strong performance at GCSE in English and Science is highly recommended. Several parts of the course look in depth at the brain, nervous system and evolution; a strong interest in biology is essential.

Progression

Psychology provides opportunities for those looking to progress to degree level in a number of fields, and can be studied as Experimental Psychology at Oxford, and as part of the Politics, Psychology and Sociology at Cambridge, as well as all of the Russell Group universities. As Psychology is a social science it has uses across many fields and is widely used in the workplace. It allows a development of core skills, building arguments, reading and understanding the work of others. All these skills are applicable in employment and at university across courses. Psychology is a particularly useful subject for those wishing to go into clinical work like health and social care services, medicine, research, teaching and human resources. It is essential for Clinical Psychology, Educational Psychology and Counseling-related fields. Other specialist fields include Sports and Criminal Psychology.

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Philosophy of Religion, Ethics & Developments in Christian Thought

OCR (specification H573)

If you agree that religion, ethics and philosophy are fundamental to humanity's understanding of the world and of humanity itself, then this may well be the course for you. The world is changing, but as long as there are people, we will need Religious Studies.

A Level Religious Studies is one of the fastest growing subjects nationally, not least because of the key philosophical questions and current ethical issues it tackles. Much like A Level Philosophy, it will particularly appeal to students who have an interest in conceptual thought, have a capacity for analytical thinking, and enjoy a good debate. However, unlike A Level Philosophy, it also provides the opportunity to explore contemporary issues such as sexual ethics, gender and religious pluralism in a modern, multi-faith world. Although the qualification is in Religious Studies, the content of the course is very different to GCSE Religious Studies and the GCSE is not required to take the A Level. The course requires no specific religious commitment or former knowledge, and can be studied by anyone with an enquiring and critical mind.

This course has **three** equally weighted units, all of which will be examined at the end of a two-year course based upon OCR specification H573. Each unit is assessed by a two-hour unseen exam whereby students answer three essays from a choice of four essay-style questions.

UNIT 1: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Including the following:

- The influence of Ancient Greek philosophers on the philosophy of religion
- Judeo-Christian influences views on the nature of God
- Traditional arguments for the existence of God, including ideas from Anselm, Descartes, Aquinas and Paley
- Challenges to religious belief, including ideas from Hume, Kant, Darwin, Marx, Freud and Russell
- Issues in religious language
- The nature and impact of religious experience
- Ideas about the nature of God
- The possibility of life after death

UNIT 2: ETHICS

Including the following:

- Natural Law: Aquinas, Aristotle and the use of reason
- Virtue ethics: Aristotle, Macintyre, Foot and the idea of 'eudaimonia'
- Kantian ethics: Kant's theories of duty, moral law and good will
- Utilitarianism: Bentham, Mill and Peter Singer
- Religious ethics: How religious followers make ethical decisions
- Sex and sexuality in the twenty first century, the effect of society, peer pressure and social media
- Euthanasia: The concepts of 'Sanctity of Life' and 'Quality of Life'
- Genetic engineering: Applied to human beings, animals, plants and human embryo research

- Meta-ethics: Naturalism, intuitionism and emotivism
- Free will and determinism
- The nature and role of conscience

UNIT 3: DEVELOPMENTS IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Including the following:

- Human nature and the purpose of life
- The self and immortality
- Knowledge and revelation of God
- The Bible: How it can be interpreted, and whether it should serve as a source of moral authority
- The nature of Jesus Christ: Traditional Christian teaching, and the links between the historical Christ and the Christ of faith
- The challenges of secularism and responses to it
- Christian views about other religions: Exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism
- Gender in society and theology: How Christianity can and has responded to changing views on gender and roles, and how feminist theologians have interpreted the Bible and the Trinity

How would this course benefit you?

Religious Studies is a challenging academic subject that requires critical thinking and constructive argument, both in debate and written form. With a strong affinity with other A Level subjects, Religious Studies shares subject matter, processes of thought and argument with the sciences, humanities and mathematics. As Bertrand Russell said, "Religion and science are two aspects of social life, of which the former has been important as far back as we know anything of man."

Religious Studies requires the ability to analyse and assess challenging ideas, including arguing a case from others' points of view. It involves communicating with precision and clarity, all while retaining sensitivity and emotional intelligence to avoid alienating those who disagree. In short, it develops people skills, and this is precisely what employers hope to find in their best candidates. As such, the course is relevant and useful for potential career paths, serving as excellent preparation for diverse areas in the world of work. Religious Studies students are found using their skills and making a difference in the world in fields such as medicine, law, business, journalism, politics, media and social work.

Former Philosophy and Theology students include Bill Clinton, Rowan Williams, Woody Allen, Bruce Lee, George Soros, T S Eliot, the former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and Martin Luther King. If this list is anything to go by, you will be embarking on a journey with unlimited potential by studying A Level Religious Studies.

Religious Studies can be excellent preparation for the world of university or employment, but it is also more than that; it has the potential to prepare you for life itself. The questions it considers are significant. And if you ask anyone who has studied the subject, they'll probably tell you they had a lot of fun along the way!

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SCIENCE

The principal reason for choosing any A Level subject is that you have genuine passion and curiosity in one or more of the sciences. You will therefore enjoy studying it in the future. This will most probably be based on your experience at GCSE having studied Triple Science.

The Science Department offers courses in all three Sciences. **We strongly recommend that boys wishing to enter the Sixth Form get an 8 or 9 grade in the appropriate GCSE subject.** In exceptional circumstances, for Double Award Science candidates, a double 9 grade will be essential, with a strong UMS in the chosen subject. This would qualify you to study Biology or Physics A Level; however, the final decision will lie with the Head of Department. **A top grade in Mathematics may also be required for Physics A level.** You may wish to discuss your suitability for a subject with the Head of Department.

The combination of subjects that you choose will depend to some extent on any potential career that you have in mind. For example, Engineers must study Maths and Physics, whilst Medics and Dentists will take Chemistry and Biology A Level. You should certainly consider a 'contrasting' subject for Medicine as this can be beneficial. A Levels in Science subjects are obviously important for careers in Applied Science but they are also appropriate for a wide variety of other degree courses, many of which include elements of Management Studies, Economics and Law as part of their programme.

Many University Departments offer a year abroad as part of a Science degree and you may wish to take a Modern Language in concert with the Science subjects or you might consider an Arts or Humanities subject. The Science Department has a good record of entry to excellent universities in a number of varied and exciting courses.

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BIOLOGY

OCR

The OCR Biology A specification builds on concepts and skills that have been developed in the IGCSE Biology course. It presents Biology as an exciting, relevant and challenging practical subject. The specification emphasizes the way in which scientists work and the contribution of Biology to modern society.

Lower Sixth

Students will complete five modules in the first year of the course:

- Module 1 – Development of practical skills in biology
- Module 2 – Foundations in biology
- Module 3 – Exchange and transport
- Module 4 – Biodiversity, evolution and disease
- Module 6 – Ecosystems

Upper Sixth

Students will complete an additional two modules in the second year of the course:

- Module 5 – Communication, homeostasis and energy
- Module 6 – Genetics and evolution

There are three written external examinations at the end of the second year:

Paper	Paper - Component Number	Marks	Length (minutes)	% of Total A Level
1	Biological Processes (01)	100	135	37
2	Biological Diversity (02)	100	135	37
3	Unified Biology (03)	70	90	26

Component 01 assesses content from Modules 1, 2, 3 and 5.

Component 02 assesses content from Modules 1, 2, 4 and 6.

Component 03 assesses content from all Modules (1 to 6).

All components include synoptic assessment.

In addition to the written examinations all students must complete Component 04, the Practical Endorsement. This is a selection of non-examined practical activities that will take place throughout the two-year course. Module 1 of the specification content relates to the practical skills learners are expected to gain throughout the course that are assessed throughout the written examinations and also through the Practical Endorsement. In order to pass the A Level course, your teachers will need to attest to your ability to carry out experimental procedures safely and accurately.

The study of Biology at A Level provides a good foundation for courses in Veterinary Science, Medicine, Pharmacology, Biology, Biochemistry, Anatomy, Physiology, Zoology, Psychology, Dentistry and Environmental Science. Those wishing to study Medicine and Veterinary Science are encouraged to use part of their holiday and/or weekends to widen their experience working in hospitals, care homes, shadowing doctors, GPs or Dentists.

Who Should Study Biology A Level

It is expected that those who wish to study Biology at A Level have a genuine interest in the subject, are committed to working exceptionally hard both in and out of the lab as it is an extremely content heavy and challenging subject. The successful student will show a willingness to extend his involvement beyond routine class work and weekly written work by engaging in wider reading to derive the full benefits from a challenging and interesting course. Independent learning is vital. It is strongly advised that Biology is studied in conjunction with another Science subject at A Level.

Those opting to study Biology at A Level will be taught by two teachers, who will share the teaching of the course. Students will be tested regularly to monitor progress with end of topic tests spread throughout the two-year course.

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CHEMISTRY

Edexcel

The Chemistry Department will be offering the Edexcel specification for A Level. This is an exciting course and one that builds on the IGCSE course you have been studying for GCSE.

Course Structure

Throughout the course you will be taught by two teachers: one for the Organic side of the course and one for the Inorganic side. The Physical Chemistry topics are split between the two teachers. There are a total of 19 topics:

- Topic 1: Atomic structure and the Periodic Table
- Topic 2: Bonding and Structure
- Topic 3: Redox I
- Topic 4: Inorganic Chemistry and the Periodic Table
- Topic 5: Formulae, Equations and Amounts of Substance
- Topic 6: Organic Chemistry I
- Topic 7: Modern Analytical Techniques I
- Topic 8: Energetics I
- Topic 9: Kinetics I
- Topic 10: Equilibrium I
- Topic 11: Equilibrium II
- Topic 12: Acid-base Equilibria
- Topic 13: Energetics II
- Topic 14: Redox II
- Topic 15: Transition Metals
- Topic 16: Kinetics II
- Topic 17: Organic Chemistry II
- Topic 18: Organic Chemistry III
- Topic 19: Modern Analytical Techniques II

Assessment

At the end of the course you will sit three written papers:

Papers 1 and 2 will each be 105 minutes in length, consist of 90 marks, assess specific topics from the course, and represent 30% of the total qualification. The remaining 40% will be assessed in the synoptic Paper 3, which will be worth 120 marks and last 150 minutes. As well as drawing from any part of the specification, this paper will assess your understanding of experimental methods.

Throughout the course, your practical skills will also be assessed by your teachers within lessons. In order to pass the A Level course, your teachers will need to attest to your ability to carry out experimental procedures safely and accurately.

Should I study A Level Chemistry?

Do you enjoy understanding how the world around you works on a microscopic level? Do you want to be able to synthesise molecules like aspirin? Or explain what causes certain substances to exhibit colour? Or even the chemistry behind the battery in your phone? A Level Chemistry looks to answer these questions, ultimately developing your problem solving skills and your ability to justify scientific phenomena.

A successful student will show a willingness to extend his involvement beyond routine class work and weekly written work by engaging in wider reading to derive the full benefits from a challenging and interesting course.

A good IGCSE grade (8 or 9) should not be the only indicator of whether Chemistry is a suitable A Level choice. Recommendations from teachers should be carefully considered. The jump from IGCSE to A Level is sharp, and a lot of hard work is unavoidable!

Above all, however, you should study A Level Chemistry if you have enjoyed studying it thus far.

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PHYSICS

AQA

Merchant Taylors' offers the AQA A Level Physics course. The course blends material that builds directly onto the IGCSE material, whilst introducing new modern concepts in Physics.

The aim of any Physics course must be to enable the student to develop an understanding of the phenomena which are observed in every part of the universe. Further, students should develop their ability to explain these phenomena and solve problems involving them by applying simple Physics concepts with logic, reason and using mathematical skills. In addition, students will carry out experiments to investigate these phenomena.

It is important that students who embark on Physics at A Level appreciate that the course does not require extensive learning of isolated knowledge. Instead, students should expect to learn to understand how a reasonably small set of concepts can be applied to a wide variety of situations to explain them. **Problem solving** and **application of understanding** are the key skills required in A Level Physics; these transferable skill makes it a desirable A Level to study. Although the real reason to study Physics is if you are fascinated by how the world around you works.

In deciding whether a course in Physics is suitable for him, a prospective student must review his level of endeavour in IGCSE Physics. It is clear that it is those students who are genuinely inquisitive and prepared to work thoroughly who will enjoy the most success.

The Importance of Maths in Physics:

While it is not an absolute requirement to study A Level Maths alongside Physics, not many boys study Physics without Maths at our school, as mathematical fluency is required to do well. If the Maths Department would advise you against taking A level Maths, then A level Physics would also not be an advisable subject choice. Boys who undertake Physics without A Level Maths will be required to learn some extra Maths beyond what they have done in Fifth Form. Further, the study of Maths with Physics it is highly advisable, and the subjects are often taken together. To pursue Physics or Engineering at university A Level Maths is essential. It is worth considering that if you wish to read Physics or Engineering at a top university you would typically also take Further Maths as well if possible, to strengthen your application and prepare you for the course. Top Universities may question why you have not taken Further Maths if you could have taken it.

The topics covered in A Level Physics will be in the following sections:

1. Measurements and their errors
2. Particles and radiation
3. Waves
4. Mechanics and materials
5. Electricity
6. Further mechanics and thermal Physics
7. Fields and their consequences
8. Nuclear physics
9. Astrophysics

Assessments:

Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3
What's assessed Sections 1 – 5 and 6.1 (Periodic motion)	What's assessed Sections 6.2 (Thermal Physics), 7 and 8 Assumed knowledge from sections 1 to 6.1	What's assessed Section A: Compulsory section: Practical skills and data analysis Section B: Students enter for one of sections 9, 10, 11, 12 or 13
Assessed Written exam: 2 hours 85 marks 34% of A Level	Assessed Written exam: 2 hours 85 marks 34% of A Level	Assessed Written exam: 2 hours 80 marks 32% of A Level
Questions 60 marks of short and long answer questions and 25 multiple choice questions on content	Questions 60 marks of short and long answer questions and 25 multiple choice questions on content	Questions 45 marks of short and long answer questions on practical experiments and data analysis. 35 marks of short and long answer questions on optional topic

What do these A Level Physics topics involve?

The Electricity topic builds directly on the work done at IGCSE to provide a more complete picture. Similarly, the Mechanics and Materials topic continues to build on familiar concepts relating to forces and energy from IGCSE. The material will now be covered in a much more mathematical way. Meanwhile, the Particles and Radiation components offer an introduction to an entirely new and very exciting branch of Physics; including looking at concepts such as the photoelectric effect and wave-particle duality, as well as the Standard Model of Particle Physics. The Waves topic again builds on IGCSE work then explores the new wave behaviours of interference and diffraction, again this will be more mathematical than at IGCSE.

The topics of Fields, Further Mechanics and Thermal Physics completes the student's education in Classical Physics. Fields covers electric, magnetic and gravitational fields and capacitors; Further Mechanics covers momentum; simple harmonic motion and circular motion and Thermal Physics covers gas laws and specific heat capacities and latent heat. Nuclear Physics covers radioactivity, nuclear physics including fission and fusion.

How will Practical Skills be assessed?

A dedicated programme of practical skills development is used to ensure each student is fully prepared for the written practical skills and data analysis part of paper 3. This will not involve an actual practical exam or course work although there are 12 Core practicals all students must complete. There is a separate practical endorsement which is pass or fail, based on the 12 practicals and in addition to the practical questions set in paper 3.

If you wish to discuss your suitability for A Level Physics, please speak to Mrs Mayadeen and your IGCSE Physics teacher.

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SPORTS SCIENCE (PHYSICAL EDUCATION)

AQA

Why Sports Science?

Our A Level Sport Science AQA qualification allows students to play to their strengths and gain dynamic theoretical and practical skills for further education or work. Our programme of study aims at equipping our pupils with an understanding of the skills relating to scientific, socio-cultural, psychological and practical aspects of physical education.

New aspects of the course include the role that technology plays in world sport and the key socio-cultural factors that influence involvement in physical activity and sport.

A Level Sport Science also opens up a whole number of options at University; these include sports science, physiotherapy, sports medicine, sports marketing or coaching. Sports Science will benefit anyone who is studying Sciences at A Level and links nicely with other A Levels including Biology and Psychology.

Specification at a glance

This qualification is now linear, meaning all students will sit their exams and submit all their non-exam assessment at the end of the course:

- Applied anatomy and physiology
- Skill acquisition
- Sport and society
- Exercise physiology
- Biomechanical movement
- Sport psychology
- Sport and society and the role of technology in physical activity and sport

Assessments

Paper 1: Factors affecting participation in physical activity and sport

What's assessed

Section A: Applied anatomy and physiology = multiple choice, short answer and extended writing (35 marks)

Section B: Skill acquisition = multiple choice, short answer and extended writing (35 marks)

Section C: Sport and society = multiple choice, short answer & extended writing (35 marks)

How it's assessed

Written exam: 2 hours

105 marks

35% of A Level

Paper 2: Factors affecting optimal performance in physical activity and sport

What's assessed

Section A: Exercise physiology & biomechanics = multiple choice, short answer & extended writing (35 marks)

Section B: Sport psychology = multiple choice, short answer and extended writing (35 marks)

Section C: Sport and society & technology in sport = multiple choice, short answer & extended writing (35 marks)

How it's assessed

Written exam: 2 hours

105 marks

35% of A Level

Non-exam assessment (NEA): Practical performance in physical activity and sport

What's assessed

There are two aspects to the NEA:

1. Performance assessment (practical performance) Students are assessed as a performer or coach in the full sided version of one activity with evidence recorded via video.

N.B most students will need to be able to perform one sport from the course specification to a decent club or school standard and pupils are responsible for collecting their own footage.

2. Performance analysis assessment (analysis and evaluation). A written/verbal analysis of performance, worth 45 Marks.

N.B this does not need to be written about the same sport that you are performing in.

How it's assessed

Internal assessment, external moderation

90 marks

30% of A Level

If you have any further questions regarding the course, please do come and speak with us.

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