



BIRKENHEAD  
— SCHOOL —  
SIXTH FORM

*A Level  
Options Guide*

  
**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

SCHOOLS GUIDE  
2025

INDEPENDENT SECONDARY  
SCHOOL OF THE YEAR  
NORTH WEST



# Art & Design

Head of Department : Mrs Margerison

Examination Board : AQA

At Birkenhead School we follow the 2 year A Level course (AQA Art & Design; Fine Art 7202). The course builds on skills acquired at GCSE with students exploring and creating personal work using a range of 2D and/or 3D art, craft and design processes. Individual responses could take the form of drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, mixed media (including textiles) and sculpture. Students' work is informed and enriched by critical and contextual studies; this is important in establishing good analytical skills and use of appropriate terminology ready for the written element of the Personal Investigation in Upper Sixth.

Lower Sixth is structured to encourage students to experiment with different techniques and approaches while incorporating existing skills at a higher level than previously. At the beginning of the course students work on teacher led projects before moving onto an extended project based on their own interests. Students choose their Personal Investigation theme in the summer term of Lower Sixth, focusing on this throughout the autumn until they receive their exam paper at the start of February in Upper Sixth. A visit to London galleries at the start of the autumn term informs A Level students' work each year.

## Why Study Art?

- Critical Thinking and Analysis - art students are trained to think creatively and to move beyond the superficial. They learn to make sound conclusions based on carefully gathered evidence. As critical thinkers they are able to process abstract ideas, and can examine issues from many different perspectives becoming master problem solvers and decision makers.
- Communication - because much of their learning is based on understanding and conveying complex ideas and diverse points of view, arts students become skilled writers and articulate speakers.
- Research - Arts students develop research skills they can apply to any issue or problem. Not only do they learn how to find information, they also learn how to assess its quality.
- Creativity - their creativity makes them innovators - independent thinkers with the motivation to develop new solutions to old problems.
- A Global Perspective - through their study of diverse cultural and intellectual traditions, arts students learn that there are many different ways of seeing the world.
- Interpersonal Abilities - because they learn to be both independent thinkers and informed collaborators, arts students are equally skilled at working individually and as part of a team. Their self-reliance, thoroughness, and strong work ethic makes them valued co-workers in whatever careers they choose.

# Art & Design

## **Component 1: Personal Investigation – practical investigation supported by written material**

Students will conduct a practical investigation into an idea, issue, concept or theme which is supported by written material (3000 words max). The focus of the investigation will be chosen independently by the student and will lead to a finished outcome (or a series of related finished outcomes). The A Level is supported with visits to galleries or other places of relevance to the personal investigation.

- No time limit
- 96 marks
- 60% of A Level

Non-exam assessment set and marked by the centre and moderated by AQA.

## **Component 2: Externally set assignment**

Students receive their exam paper on 1st February. They select one starting point from the eight provided.

- Preparatory period + 15 hour supervised time
- 96 marks
- 40% of A Level

Non-exam assessment set by AQA, marked by the centre and moderated by AQA.

The 15-hour exam is normally timetabled to take place close to the start of Study Leave. All prep work must be submitted at the start of the exam period.

The A Level marks come through the Personal Investigation (60%) and the exam component (40%). All work is marked according to Assessment Objectives, similar to those at GCSE. Each AO represents 25% of each Unit's mark. This is marked in School and then moderated by AQA.

Throughout the course itself students are set individual tasks and graded as they develop work in class and at home. Specific tasks are set for homework, however, it is important that students take an independent approach to their learning, and take ownership of their own progress. Students who embrace this way of working are those who inevitably achieve the highest grades.

Students will be expected to use study periods and afterschool as well as lesson time.

# Biology

Head of Department : Mr Armstrong

Examination Board : AQA

Entry Criteria: Grade 7 to 9 GCSE Biology / Combined Science 7-7 to 9-9 with strong Biology component.

## Why Study Biology?

The Biological Sciences are the most diverse of subjects involving the study of a wide variety of exciting topics, from molecular biology to ecosystems and from microorganisms to mammoths. Biology is highly relevant to everyday life and biologists have many career opportunities in today's world.

## Getting into A Level

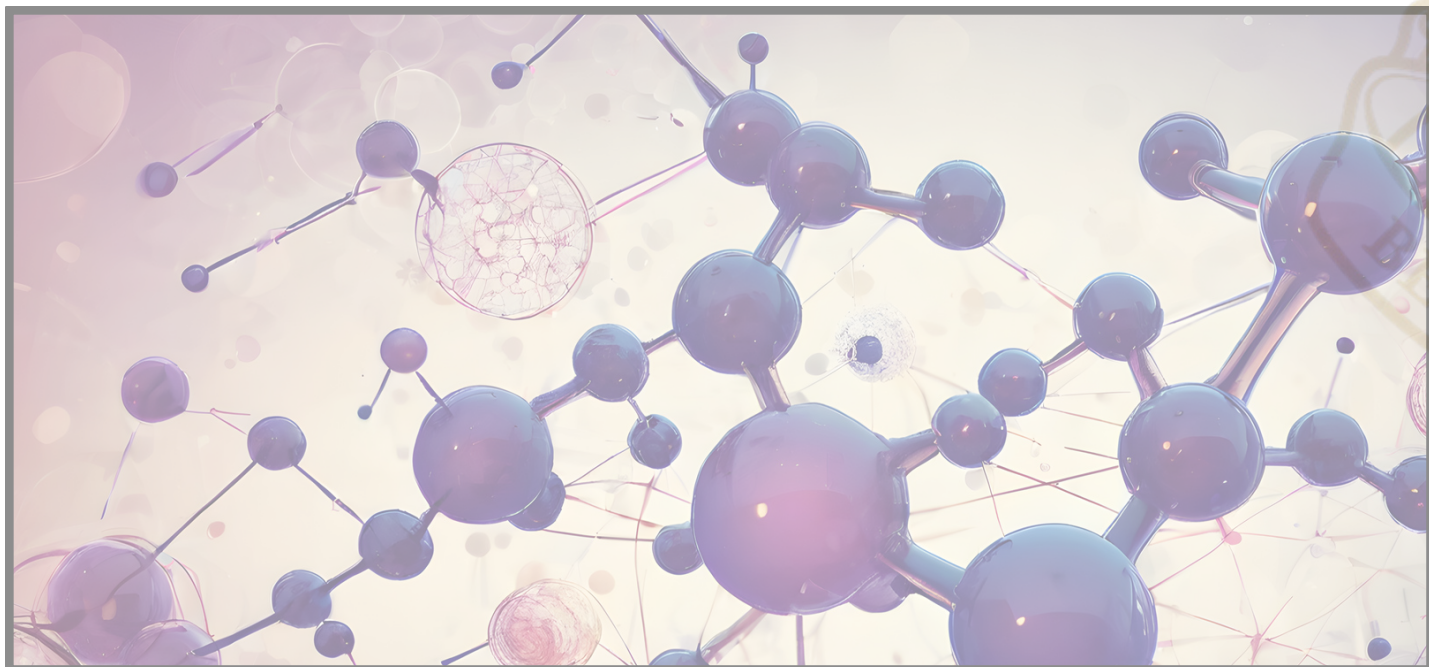
To have a foundation for success at A Level you will need grade 7 to 9 GCSE Biology. If you do Combined Science, you will need 7-7 to 9-9 with a very strong Biology component. Most of our students also study A Level Chemistry and you might struggle if you are not a confident chemist. Also, due to the substantial mathematical content of the course, you also need to be a competent mathematician.

### Lower Sixth:

1. Biological molecules
2. Cells
3. Organisms exchange substances with their environment
4. Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms

### Upper Sixth:

1. Energy transfers in and between organisms
2. Organisms respond to changes in their internal and external environments
3. Genetics, populations, evolution and ecosystems
4. The control of gene expression



# Biology

## What have our students done after A Level?

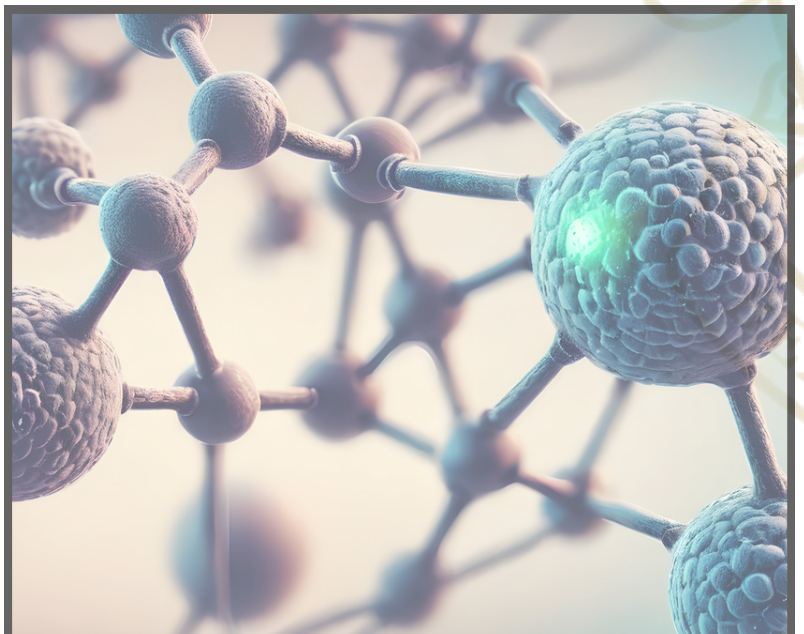
Biology is one of the most popular A Level subjects in the country, attracting students studying a wide range of other subjects. Many eventually choose a Biology-related degree, but whatever field you will eventually work in, you will find Biology a very rewarding and challenging course, which will develop many of the skills essential for a successful career.

If you plan to do Biology beyond A Level, you will almost certainly need A Level Chemistry too. The graphic below shows, proportionately, what most of our students have gone on to study in recent years.



## Why so many of our Sixth Form study Biology:

1. Approachable teachers
2. Fully printed notes
3. Cutting-edge practicals
4. Lots of exam practice
5. Individual support
6. Links with Universities



# Business

Head of Department : Mr Rule

Examination Board : EdExcel

## What is Business?

Business is about the day to day decisions made within a firm to make it run in an efficient and profitable fashion. But, much more than that, it is about the decisions that affect the long run, for example, whether to expand or shrink, move abroad or stay in the UK, invest in technology or retrain staff, slash prices or advertise. It is these bigger decisions that all businesses have to consider if they are to survive in the tough economic climate. All of this and much more is covered in the A Level Business course.

## Why Study Business A Level?

Business is an A Level that allows you to expand your understanding of the financial and business world. It is relevant to the modern world around us and whatever career students choose to enter into in the future it is likely they will have to have some understanding of the way a business functions.

It requires many different skill sets and will complement a whole range of other A Levels. Students who study the subject are encouraged to be creative in their thinking and apply themselves to case study based problem solving. By the end of two years, students will know the ins and outs of creating, managing and expanding a business. They will know all about profit, and how best to make more of it!



# Business

## Lower Sixth:

### Marketing & HR:

This section covers the issues involved in a business start-up:

- Market Research
- Demand and Supply
- Pricing
- Recruitment
- Motivation
- Entrepreneurship

### Managing Business Activities::

This section covers the issues involved in improving a business' efficiency:

- Raising Finance
- Financial Planning
- Profitability
- Operations Management
- The External Environment

## Upper Sixth:

### Business Decisions, Strategy and the Global Environment

The Upper Sixth course looks at how to manage your growing business strategically. It will consider issues such as investment appraisal, analysing a set of accounts, developing and implementing a new product and human resource management. It will also consider how to expand a business into a global context.



# Chemistry

Head of Department : Mrs Baxter

Examination Board : AQA

## Why Study Chemistry

Studying A Level Chemistry equips students with strong analytical and problem-solving skills while deepening their understanding of how the world works at a molecular level. It encourages logical thinking, practical laboratory skills, and confidence in handling complex information. Chemistry also keeps a wide range of future pathways open, as it is highly valued for degrees and careers in medicine, engineering, environmental science, pharmacy, and many other scientific fields.

## Getting into A Level

To have a foundation for success at A Level you will need grade 7 to 9 GCSE Chemistry. If you do Combined Science, you will need 7-7 to 9-9 with a very strong Chemistry component. Due to the substantial mathematical content of the course, you also need to be a competent mathematician.

## Chemistry at Birkenhead School

A natural progression from AQA GCSE Chemistry. Many topics revisited but covered in greater depth.

- An increased emphasis on explanation and understanding. A reduced focus on simply learning facts, with more time spent on analysis and application.
- More sophisticated and interesting practical tasks. Students' competence in this area will be assessed by completing 12-15 'required practicals'.
- There is no coursework. As with the GCSE Specification, knowledge and understanding of practical work will be tested within the written papers.
- The Department has a well-established record of success, with most Lower Sixth students continuing on to A Level. The majority of the School's successful Oxbridge applicants have studied Chemistry to A Level.
- All students will have the opportunity to engage in out of class activities, including the challenging Chemistry Olympiad Competition, helping them to stand out on UCAS or apprenticeship applications.



# Chemistry

## Course Content

### Lower Sixth Units:

#### Physical / Inorganic Chemistry

- Atomic Structure
- Amount of Substance
- Bonding
- Energetics
- Kinetics
- Chemical Equilibria
- Redox Equations
- Periodicity
- Groups 2 and 7

#### Organic Chemistry

- Nomenclature
- Isomerism
- Alkanes
- Alkenes
- Haloalkanes
- Alcohol
- Analytical Techniques

### Upper Sixth Units:

#### Physical Chemistry

- Kinetics: Rate Equations
- Equilibria:  $K_p$  Calculations
- Acids and Bases
- Thermodynamics
- Electrode Potentials

#### Organic Chemistry

- Carbonyl Chemistry
- Aromatic Chemistry
- Amines, Amino Acids, Polymers and Proteins
- Synthesis and Analysis
- N.M.R and Chromatography

#### Inorganic Chemistry

- Periodicity: Period 3
- Transition Metal Chemistry
- Reactions of Ions in Aqueous Solution



### Royal Society of Chemistry Analytical Competition

A Lower Sixth team is selected each year to take part in the RSC Analytical Competition. The School has been regional winners 3 times and National runners up.

### Chemistry Olympiad:

Eleven students have earned a prestigious Gold Award during the last 5 years.

*Please note that if you are not taking separate sciences at GCSE, you need to seek the advise of the Head of Department.*

# Design & Technology

## Product Design

Head of Department: Mr Jenkins

Examination Board : EDUQAS Product Design

The Design and Technology A Level specification is designed to encourage candidates to:

- Develop a broad view of design and technology
- Develop their capacity to design and make products
- Appreciate the complex relations between design, materials, manufacture and marketing.

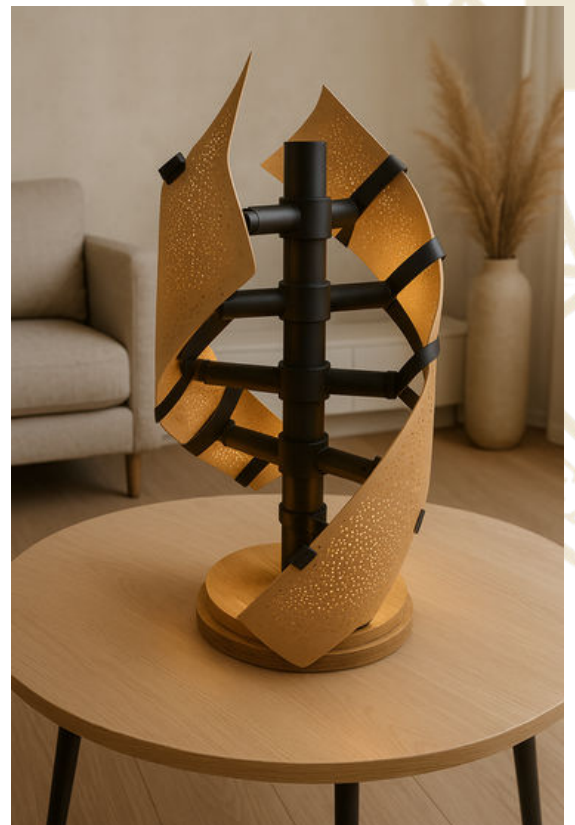
In the Lower Sixth, candidates develop an understanding of a broad range of materials, with emphasis on the life cycle of products, manufacture and final disposal. This specification also considers the broader issues for the designer including the environmental sustainability of products and consumer safety: They are also presented with a number of mini-projects to further develop their understanding of the stages of design and make projects and to consolidate their manufacture skills base.

The course includes two areas of assessment.

### Component 1: Written Examination, 50% of A Level

Candidates are assessed on the following topics:

- Designing and Innovation
- Materials and Components
- Processes
- Industrial and Commercial Practice
- Product Analysis and Systems
- Human Responsibility



# Design & Technology

## Component 2: NEA (Non-Examined Assessment)

In the Upper Sixth, the specification offers candidates the opportunity to further develop and apply their knowledge and practical skills as they embark upon the study of a final design and make project, NEA. This will require them to evidence an understanding of the processes and procedures of commercial production and manufacture.

Students study an extensive design and make project evidencing the following elements of Product Design.

- A design brief developed by the students that challenges design ideas
- A professional prototype is manufactured that fits the chosen brief
- A design portfolio containing fully documented research and planning for all stages of the project
- Market and user research with ergonomics and anthropometric studies
- Full testing strategy of the final product
- Computer Aided Design and Virtual Reality modelling to support the final design



# Drama & Theatre Studies

Head of Department: Mrs Ballantyne

Subject Lead: Mrs Groves

Examination Board : Eduqas

## **Component 1: Theatre Workshop**

Non-exam assessment: internally assessed, externally moderated

20% of qualification

Learners will be assessed on either acting or design.

Learners participate in the creation, development and performance of a piece of theatre based on a reinterpretation of an extract from a script.

The piece must be developed using the techniques and working methods of either an influential theatre practitioner or a recognised theatre company.

Learners must produce:

- a realisation of the performance or design
- a creative log

## **Component 2: Text in Action**

Non-exam assessment: externally assessed by a visiting examiner

40% of qualification

Learners will be assessed on either acting or design.

Learners participate in the creation, development and performance of two pieces of theatre based on a stimulus:

1. a devised piece using the techniques and working methods of either an influential theatre practitioner or a recognised theatre company
2. an extract from a text in a different style chosen by the learner.



# Drama & Theatre Studies

Head of Department: Mrs Ballantyne

Subject Lead: Mrs Groves

Examination Board : Eduqas

## **Component 3: Text in Performance**

Written examination: 2 hours 30 minutes

40% of qualification

### **Current Texts:**

- Company, Stephen Sondheim
- Small Island, Andrea Levy adapted Helen Edmundson
- The Book of Dust – La Belle Sauvage, Philip Pullman adapted by Bryony Lavery



# Economics

Head of Department: Mr Rule

Examination Board : Edexcel

## What is Economics?

Economics is all around us, all the time. It is the only subject that is on the front page of every newspaper every week and has a very real application in everyday lives. Economics is concerned with matters which will affect all of us at some time in our lives. Inflation, unemployment, interest rates, taxes, the value of the pound, house prices and recessions are all matters that we study in A Level Economics.

*"Without economy none can be rich, and with it few will be poor." Samuel Johnson (British author b. 1709)*

## Where does it fit in?

Economics has the advantage of being suitable for combining with both arts and science subjects. It can be studied by somebody wishing to prepare for an Economics/Business based course at university or by somebody who simply wishes to know more about the world around them. A Level Economics involves the learning of many transferable skills, and is well respected by any university in the world because of its academic rigour.



## Course Structure: Edexcel Economics A

The Economics course is linear and will be examined at the end of two years of study. It is split into two clear parts Microeconomics and Macroeconomics.

### Lower Sixth

#### Introduction to Microeconomics:

This topic provides an introduction into the nature of Economics. It uses economic theory to ask the important microeconomic questions. For example:

- *"Why is Erling Haaland paid so much?"*
- *"How can the government place so much tax on fuel?"*
- *"What happens when oil resources run out?"*
- *"Should the government let people drink alcohol?"*

#### Introduction to Macroeconomics:

This topic provides an introduction to the key measures of macroeconomic performance and the main objectives and instruments of economic policy. The questions we ask this time are about the whole economy. For example:

- *"Why has the Bank of England slashed interest rates?"*
- *"What is Quantitative Easing?"*
- *"To tax or not to tax?"*

### Upper Sixth

#### Complex Microeconomics and Macroeconomics

In the Upper Sixth we look to develop more detailed knowledge and skills and apply them in a wider global context. It will deal with important international issues like the EU, the expansion of China and India, pollution, the credit crunch, trade and inequality in developing countries.

There are three exams at the end of the Upper Sixth

- Microeconomics
- Macroeconomics
- Synoptic Paper (tests students' broad understanding of the entire course).



# English Literature

Head of Department: Mrs Ballantyne

Examination Board : OCR

## Why Study English Literature at A Level?

English Literature is the perfect choice for students who want to keep their options for further study open, as well as those who are already committed to the study of English at university. English Literature is a popular qualification for a wide range of courses in higher education and is useful in all careers. Journalism, creative writing, teaching, drama, law and publishing are some of the possible career opportunities.

English Literature encourages students:

- To develop their interest in, and enjoyment of, literature;
- To gain an insight into the traditions of English Literature, works written outside the UK and literature in translation;
- To become independent and reflective readers, expressing their ideas accurately and persuasively in writing and speaking;
- To use critical concepts and terminology with understanding and discrimination;
- To reflect on their own responses to texts, informed by other readers' interpretations, with an awareness of the contexts in which texts were written;
- To use their detailed knowledge and understanding of individual texts to explore comparisons and connections between them, and to appreciate the significance of cultural and historical influences upon readers and writers.



# English Literature

## A Level Specification

The English Literature A Level consists of three components: two externally assessed examinations and one non-examined assessment component that is internally assessed by the centre and externally moderated by OCR.

Students are required to study a minimum of 8 texts at A Level, including at least two examples of each of the genres of poetry, prose and drama.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                  |                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Exam 1:</b><br><br><b>Drama and Poetry Pre-1900</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shakespeare</li><li>• Drama and Poetry Pre-1900</li><li>• Closed Text</li></ul>                                                                   | 2 hours 30 min<br>(60 marks)     | 40% of total A Level |
| <b>Exam 2:</b><br><br><b>Comparative and Contextual Study</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Close reading (unseen)</li><li>• Comparative and Contextual essay</li><li>• Closed Text</li></ul>                                          | 2 hours 30 minutes<br>(60 marks) | 40% of total A Level |
| <b>Non-Examined Assessment Component:</b><br><br><b>Literature Post 1900</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical piece OR re-creative writing piece with commentary</li><li>• Comparative essay based on two linked texts</li></ul> | (40 marks)                       | 20% of total A Level |



# Geography

Head of Department: Mr Roberts

Examination Board : AQA

## The Course

The AQA Specification provides the opportunity to study contemporary geographical events which students can relate to the everyday world in which they live. The subject content follows an issues and impacts approach. The teaching of Geographical Skills is integrated within the core components and is designed to teach students how to collect, interpret and analyse a wide range of different types of data. A Level Geography will not offer an AS Level exam at the end of the Lower Sixth year.

## Topics

The A Level specification covers a diverse range of 'physical' and 'human' topics.

### Physical Geography

Preparation for the Physical Geography paper will include the study of 'Water and Carbon Cycles', 'Glacial Systems and Landscapes', and 'Hazards'.

### Human Geography

Human Geography topics will include 'Global Systems and Global Governance', 'Changing Places' and 'Population and the Environment'.

## Examinations

Each of these two sections will be examined by a written paper of 2 hours 30 minutes duration, which will include a variety of question styles including both short answers and extended prose.



### Fieldwork

Fieldwork is an important component of this subject and it is compulsory to complete a minimum of four days of fieldwork which will be undertaken during the two-year course.

In Year 12 you will take part in a 4-day residential trip to either Blencathra in the Lake District or the Magram Discovery Centre in South Wales. This will teach you practical fieldwork collection skills as well as help to prepare you for your Non-Examined Assessment (NEA).

You will also be offered the opportunity to take part in an international field trip.

### Non-Examined Assessment

There is a requirement for students to undertake an individual investigation on a topic of their choice from within the geography syllabus. This involves the collection of primary and secondary data which will then be presented and analysed. It is seen as excellent preparation for completing a dissertation at university.

The Independent Investigation will account for 20% of the total A Level marks.

### Where can Geography take me?

Geography is one of the Russell Group universities' facilitating subjects - so called because choosing them at A Level allows a wide range of options for degree study. It also provides a natural bridge between arts and science subjects and is therefore suitable for a wide variety of subject combinations.

As a subject which covers so many of the vital issues that affect the world of today, such as climate change, migration and natural hazards, there has arguably never been a better time to study Geography. With the mix of technical and social skills that they get from their studies, Geography graduates are highly sought after - in fact, according to the Royal Geographical Society, those who study the subject have some of the highest rates of employment.

It may be chosen as an A Level by students with a desire to follow a Geography degree course at university, or a course with a wider link to Geography, such as Biology, Economics, International Relations or even Law.

A Level students have gone on to follow a very varied range of degree courses and to apply their skills and knowledge in many different careers.



# History

Head of Department: Mr McKie

Examination Board : OCR

## The Course

There are four units in total, two to be studied during Lower Sixth (40%) and a further two in the Upper Sixth (60%). This is an A Level linear subject and all units will be sat in the Upper Sixth. The main countries under consideration are Britain, Russia and Germany.

## Lower Sixth Units:

### Unit 1 - From Pitt to Peel: Britain 1783-1853 (worth 25% of marks)

An examination of 1 hour 30 minutes

### Unit 2: The German Reformation and Rule of Charles V 1500-1559 (worth 15% of marks)

An examination of 1 hour



## Upper Sixth Units:

### Unit 3: Russia and its Rulers 1855-1964 (worth 40% of marks)

An examination of 2 hours 30 minutes



# History

## Upper Sixth Units:

### Unit 4: Coursework (worth 20% of marks)

A topic based essay of between 3000-4000 words on Nazi Germany, 1933-1945).

Unit 4 (the topic-based essay) is the traditional coursework module. The purpose of this unit is to enable candidates to assess different **historical interpretations** and to carry out an **historical investigation** of their own choosing.

The essay will be submitted to OCR. A choice of questions will be available and there is ample opportunity for students to pursue an era that they are interested in.

Possibilities include the nature of Nazi government, its impact on German society, opposition to Nazism and racial aims and policies.

The coursework will be internally assessed, and moderated by OCR.

### Why study History at A Level?:

The A Level course deals in 'strong personalities' with the likes of William Pitt the Younger, Robert Peel, Charles V, Martin Luther, Lenin, Stalin and Hitler all playing prominent roles. The ability of individuals to influence events and motivate others to take action makes History a fascinating option at A Level.

#### Qualities needed to study History:

An open and enquiring mind is an essential attribute of a good historian. A Level historians will be able to:

- Evaluate competing interpretations and arrive at secure judgements
- Absorb and manage a good deal of information
- Order and analyse information
- Reason with clarity and cogency
- Use and refine their judgements based on the evidence

Express an argument persuasively and with clarity.

Given these skills, an A Level in History is a much prized asset, both by universities and employers. It is these developed capacities which prepare students for successful careers in areas in finance, management, law, administration, the media and many others.

The bottom line is that history is interesting; it deals with human beings and the human story, our past. It helps toward a perspective on, and understanding of, the present and satisfies a basic human trait, our curiosity about our world.

# Maths & Further Maths

Head of Department: Mrs Eassie (Acting Head)

Examination Board : Edexcel

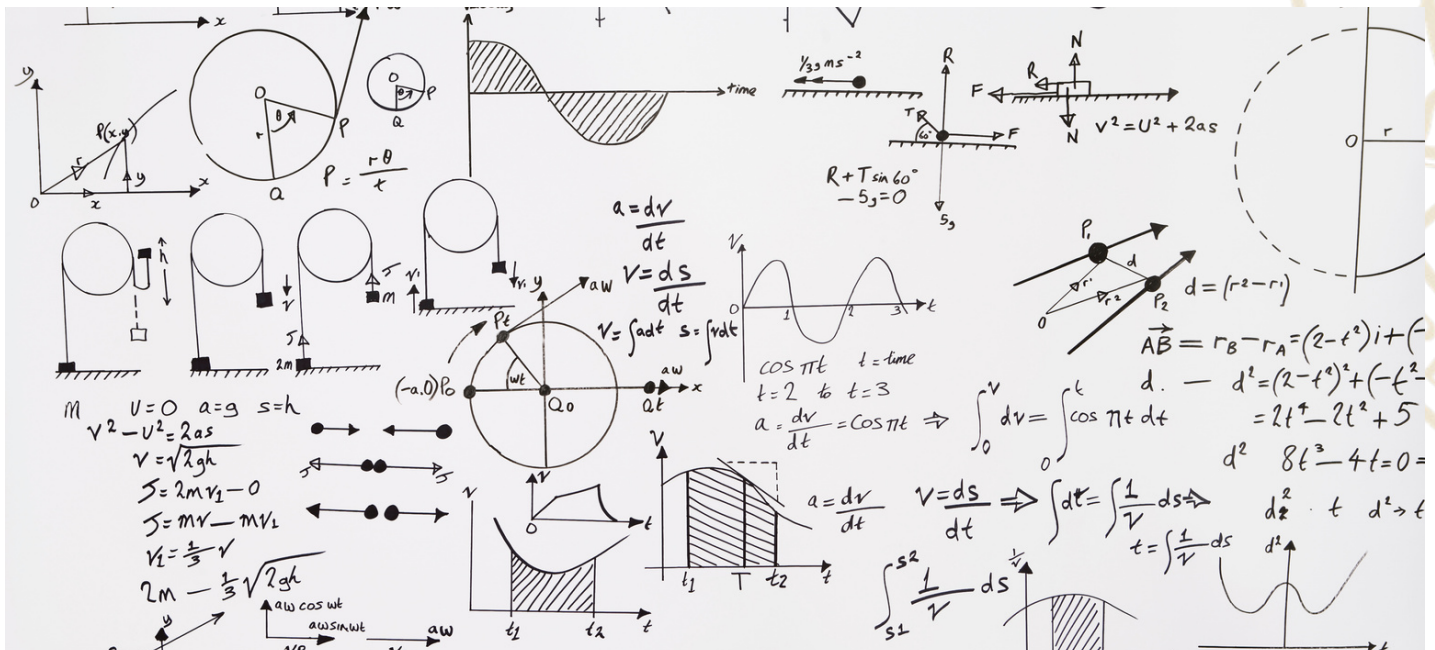
## Why Study Maths or Further Maths at A Level?

An A Level in Mathematics is universally recognised as being an extremely valuable qualification both by universities and employers. This is particularly true if you aim to study Maths or a course which uses Maths significantly at university.

You should also consider Further Maths if you are keen to study Maths or a subject which relies heavily on Maths at university. Of course, you can also take Further Maths A Level just because you enjoy Maths! As well as some natural flair for mathematics, you will be required to work hard throughout the course (10% inspiration, 90% perspiration!) and should expect to encounter frustration and anger as well as discovery and joy!

Be prepared to see some differences between your A Level and GCSE Mathematics. You will meet new concepts at a much faster rate and be expected to exhibit considerable determination and self-discipline in order to develop fluency in the techniques you learn.

Bertrand Russell claimed that “mathematics, rightly viewed, contains supreme beauty,” and at A Level we begin to see some of the power and elegance which has inspired great minds throughout history.



# Maths & Further Maths

## Requirements

You need to have achieved a minimum of grade 7 at GCSE if you want to study Mathematics A Level.

If you are keen to also study Further Mathematics you must speak to the Head of Mathematics, Mrs Eassie, in the first instance.

The Mathematics A Level consists of topics in Pure Mathematics, Statistics and Mechanics. All three are studied in both Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth.

The Further Mathematics A Level consists of more Pure Mathematics, Statistics and Mechanics spread throughout the two years of the course.

**Pure Mathematics** - we develop the algebraic techniques begun at GCSE and are introduced to Calculus - the mathematics of change.

**Statistics** - the study of Statistics allows us to present data in meaningful ways, test hypotheses and win at gambling (probably!).

**Mechanics** - we learn how Pure Mathematics can be applied to physical systems such as bouncy balls, projectiles, trains, and space rockets.

The Further Mathematicians take their study of Pure Mathematics, Statistics and Mechanics much further, taking them into areas which provide an excellent basis for the study of Mathematics, Engineering, Physics and many other subjects at university. Further Mathematicians are taught in a separate group for most topics but will join the Mathematicians for some topics.

## How will I be examined in A Level Mathematics?

**Mathematics** - End of Upper Sixth

- Pure Mathematics Examination - 2 papers (2 hours each)
- Mechanics & Statistics Examination (2 hours)

**Further Mathematics** - End of Upper Sixth

- Pure Mathematics Examination - 2 papers (1.5 hours each)
- Further Mechanics Examination - 1.5 hour
- Further Statistics Examination - 1.5 hour

# Modern Foreign Languages

Head of Department: Mrs Holgate

Examination Board : AQA

## Areas of Study:

- Social Issues and Current Trends (for example techno-age, changing family structure)
- Ethical Debates (e.g. euthanasia, the death penalty, nuclear energy)
- Current Affairs and Politics (for example immigration, freedom of speech)
- Artistic Culture and Heritage (for example music, cinema, festivals and traditions)
- Films / Books
- Grammar

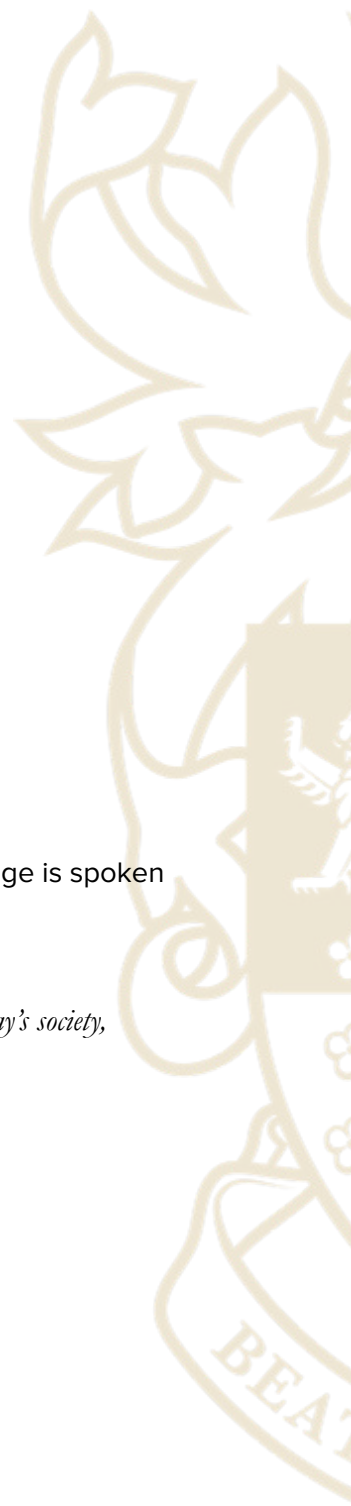
## Skills Tested:

- Listening and Reading - identifying main points, gist and detail
- Translation (both ways)
- Analysis of film / book
- Oral Communication
- Understanding written sources and summarising
- Manipulating language accurately
- Showing knowledge and understanding about the culture and society where the language is spoken
- Independent research of theme to present in oral at end of course

*An A Level subject that allows you to explore views on such a wide range of topics relevant in today's society, from racism to genetic engineering, and from equality issues to film studies*

## Learning a Language Develops Key Skills

- Debating / arguing and persuading
- Attention to detail
- Personal confidence and independence
- Listening and responding to others
- Problem solving
- Researching, evaluating and interpreting information
- Presentation skills



# Modern Foreign Languages

## Cultural Awareness and Research Skills

At A Level you have the chance to delve more deeply into the culture and society of the countries where the language is spoken. You could choose to find out more about Spain's return to democracy or the Algerian war of independence. You could study important works of literature or international cinema. Of course, there is no substitute for spending time independently in a country where your chosen language or languages are spoken, and your teachers can advise you on arranging trips abroad.

## Why Study Languages?

"Employers in almost all sectors – including law, accountancy, retail and media, to name just a few – value applicants with a foreign language. Research by CILT into the job market has shown language graduates entering a range of careers. Analysis of job specifications in advertisements shows the strongest demand remains for French and German. But proficiency in Spanish, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian and other non-European languages can also be immensely useful." (The Independent, 13th April 2011)

## Employability

Of the 291 companies surveyed in the annual education and skills survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), 41 percent said they believed knowledge of a foreign language would be beneficial to their business, while 65 percent identified a need for foreign language skills.

## Future-proof your Career

In a government report in 2021, it was acknowledged that language skills are 'increasingly important' for business, trade and competitiveness in the global marketplace. A range of reports published in recent years have considered the benefits of a language proficiency for trade and employment and note that a persistent skills gap appears to be hindering both export performance and employment opportunities.

## Joint and Combined Degrees

Universities offer a diverse range of courses combining language study with other disciplines including Law, History, Sciences, Engineering, Business and Economics, many of which include a year studying or working overseas.



# Music

Head of Department: Mrs B Hunter

Examination Board :

## Requirements:

If you've already done GCSE the course will come as no surprise because it has similar components and expectations except at a higher level. If you've not previously done GCSE it is still perfectly possible to attempt AS but you'll need to have a good theory base already and be prepared to do some catching up. You will need, however, to be a performer of not less than Grade 5/6 standard to achieve a reasonable mark in the performance units and if you're Grades 7/8 these units should not cause you any problems.

### Unit 1: Appraising Music

1

There are seven areas of study from which to choose:

- Western classical tradition 1650–1910 (compulsory)
- Pop music
- Music for media
- Music for theatre
- Jazz
- Contemporary traditional music
- Art music since 1910

Students must study area of study 1 and choose two from areas of study 2–7, one of which is studied in Lower Sixth and the other the following year.

#### What's assessed

- Listening
- Analysis
- Contextual understanding

#### How it's assessed

Exam paper with listening and written questions using excerpts of music.

Questions

- Section A: Listening
- Section B: Analysis
- Section C: Essay

This component is 40% of your total marks at A Level.

### Unit 2: Performance

2

#### What's assessed

- Music Performance

#### How it's assessed

Solo and/or ensemble performing as an instrumentalist, or vocalist and/or music production (via technology).

#### Requirement

A minimum of ten minutes of performance in total is required.

This component makes up 35% of A Level marks.

This work will be externally marked by AQA examiners.

### Unit 3: Composition

3

#### What's assessed

- Composition

#### How it's assessed

- Composition 1: Composition to a brief
- Composition 2: Free composition

#### Requirement

A minimum of four and a half minutes of music in total is required.

This component is worth 25% of A Level marks.

This work will be externally marked by AQA examiners.

# Music



## The Future

Although it is true to say that the majority of Music A Level students go on to read this subject at university, many have gone on to read other subjects and music is generally regarded very favourably in applications, it being an Arts subject that requires a high degree of personal discipline, practical skill and academic rigour. And did you know that ABRSM and Trinity Guildhall Graded Examinations now give you valuable UCAS points? Past students have gone on to be performers, recording engineers, composers and teachers, not to mention lawyers and various other non-musical professions, so this qualification is not limiting.



# Physical Education

Head of Department: Mr Taylor

Examination Board : OCR

**Entry Criteria: Students need to play a Focus Sport and have a minimum of Grade 6 in at least 1 Science at GCSE**

## **Who is A Level Physical Education for?**

You should have a keen interest in physical education and sport, and play a School focus sport or compete at regional level or above outside of School.

In addition to the above, the course will appeal to students who:

- Want to maintain and develop their involvement and effectiveness in physical activity
- Want to learn about healthy lifestyles, fitness and training, and preparation for sports performance
- Play at least one sport at a high standard, ideally school or club 1st team, regional or national level
- Be knowledgeable and interested in your chosen sport , be able to discuss the technical aspects involved
- Would like to identify opportunities locally, nationally and internationally for them to advance their participation in physical activity
- Want to know more about sport, from grass roots to the elite level, and the development of competitive sport
- Want to study a course that is active and that they will enjoy
- May want to move on to a related career or higher education course

**The most important requirements are: playing a School focus sport or competing at regional level (or above) outside of School; a lively and enquiring mind; a passion for and an interest in physical education; a willingness to explore new ideas and an ability to communicate your ideas effectively**



# Physical Education

## What do I need to know or be able to do before taking this course?

- Students will have the chance to take on the roles of 'performer' or 'coach' at A Level.
- The course involves both theoretical and practical components.
- Assessment includes oral and practical coursework tasks, and written examination papers.
- Students will maintain their own coursework portfolio and training/performance logbook.
- Physical performance accounts for 15% of the final A Level grade.

## What could I go on to do at the end of my course?

Students with A Level PE have access to a wide range of possible career and higher education opportunities. You will learn skills such as collecting, analysing and interpreting data, communicating your findings in different ways, and identifying and developing the links between different parts of the subject. These skills are in great demand by employers, universities and colleges. A Level PE supports applications for a wide range of university courses like sports sciences, physiotherapy, recreational and leisure studies and there are many new and exciting courses related to sport throughout higher education and an ever expanding leisure industry has led to an increase in careers and opportunities in this sector.

|   |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                     |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Physiological Factors Affecting Performance                                             | 1.1 Applied Anatomy and Physiology<br>1.2 Ex Physiology<br>1.3 Biomechanics                                                                                         | 30%                                                                 |
| 2 | Psychological Factors Affecting Performance                                             | 2.1 Skills Acquisition<br>2.2 Sports Psychology                                                                                                                     | 20%                                                                 |
| 3 | Socio-Cultural Issues in Physical Activity & Sport                                      | 3.1 Sport & Society<br>3.2 Contemporary Issues in Physiology, Anatomy and Sport                                                                                     | 20%                                                                 |
| 4 | Performance in Physical Education<br><br>(Component 4 NEA - Non-Examination Assessment) | 4.1 Performance OR Coaching<br>4.2 Evaluation & Analysis of Performance for Improvement<br><br><b>Physical Performance accounts for 15% of final A Level grade.</b> | 30%<br><br>4.1 and 4.2 each account for 15% of final A Level grade. |

# Physics

Head of Department: Mr Mathew

Examination Board : AQA

**Entry Criteria: Students need a Grade 7 or above at GCSE Physics and GCSE Maths. Students studying Combined Science must achieve Grade 7 or above in the Physics component of the qualification.**

**It is highly recommended that students take A Level Maths alongside A Level Physics.**

## Why Study A Level Physics?

- You will explore in depth concepts of introduced at GCSE: forces, energy, waves, radioactivity, electricity and magnetism
- You will become a better problem-solver and have the opportunity to participate in competitions, such as the Olympiad, to showcase your problem-solving skills.
- Universities and employers highly regard it.
- A chance to explore the history of Physics and the key developments that have shaped it.
- It is the gateway to careers in traditionally well-known fields such as Engineering, Astronomy, Aviation, Technology, Finance, Medicine and Energy, but is also useful for up-and-coming fields such as AI, Quantum Computing, Virtual Reality and Nanotechnology.

## Physics at Birkenhead School

- The course follows on from AQA GCSE Physics but will allow you to cover topics in greater depth.
- You will be introduced to new areas such as Particle Physics, Quantum Physics and the use of Capacitors in electric circuits.
- There is increased scope for practical work in each of the required practicals, spanning several lessons.
- There is no coursework. As with the GCSE Specification, knowledge and understanding of practical work will be tested within the written papers.
- The exams consist of 3 papers; Paper 1 covers AS content in addition to Further Mechanics. Paper 2 covers Thermal Physics, Fields, and Nuclear Physics, whilst Paper 3 assesses practical skills and includes an options topic. We teach Turning Points, which explores key discoveries that shaped modern physics.
- This subject attracts students who are mathematically driven and interested in further exploring concepts taught in GCSE Physics.
- Students are expected to do 4-6 hours of extra work per week in addition to the work done in lessons, which can include homework, reviewing lesson notes, practising questions, attending drop-in or intervention sessions, and completing past papers.
- Students are also entered into Olympiad competitions, which take place at various points in the year for different year groups, with additional practice sessions to help them prepare.

# Psychology

Head of Department: Mrs O'Brien

Examination Board : Eduqas

**Entry Criteria: Grade 7 or above is required in the following subjects at GCSE: English and Biology and a minimum of Grade 5 in Maths.**

## Why Study A Level Psychology?

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and behaviour. The mind is something intangible that exists within our brain; an unseen process of enzymes, chemicals and electrical currents. Psychologists conduct studies to discover how these internal processes, alongside external factors, influence the way people behave. They try to discover what motivates, challenges or changes us and then use this understanding to tackle social and personal problems. It is a fascinating science with cutting-edge research that has real world application in contemporary society. Due to the scientific status of Psychology, the vast majority of the topics we cover have a biological basis. You will therefore need a minimum of grade 7 in Biology.

Research methods is a key component in the course and questions relating to this appear in all topic areas on the specification. Participating in practical investigations will help you to understand the research methods that psychologists use to investigate behaviour. As these will include conducting research and then analysing and interpreting the data using statistical tests, a minimum of grade 5 in Mathematics is required.

Other important aspects of Psychology are critical evaluation and the ability to understand a range of theories from multiple perspectives. Essay writing is essential in Psychology therefore, a minimum of grade 7 in English is required.

## Extra-Curricular Opportunities

- 'Brain Day' workshop linked to biopsychology
- An overnight residential trip to London, visiting the Science Museum, Freud Museum and a theatre production.
- National Psychology Competition offered by Royal Holloway University, London
- Visit to Shrewsbury Prison
- John Locke Institute Essay Competition

**(Natalie do we want to add in about Shrewsbury Prison visit?)**



# Psychology

## Assessment:

There are three exams, all 2 hours and 15 minutes at the end of Upper Sixth.

Students are assessed using a range of question styles, including application to scenarios and essays.

|                                                           |                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component One:</b><br><br>Past to Present              | 100 marks<br>33.3% of A Level | An understanding of the assumptions, therapies, classic evidence, strengths, weaknesses and contemporary debates of five different approaches in Psychology:<br>1. <b>Biological</b> - brain biochemistry, neuroscience<br>2. <b>Psychodynamic</b> - the unconscious mind, childhood trauma<br>3. <b>Behaviourist</b> - phobias, conditioning techniques<br>4. <b>Cognitive</b> - memory, eyewitness testimony<br>5. <b>Positive</b> - mental health as opposed to mental illness |
| <b>Component Two:</b><br><br>Investigating Behaviour      | 100 marks<br>33.3% of A Level | 1. <b>Research Methods</b> - ethics, statistical testing, sampling<br>2. <b>Personal Investigations</b> - two pieces of investigative research into a variety of behaviours<br>3. <b>Application of Research Methods to Behavioural Scenarios</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Component 3:</b><br><br>Implications in the Real World | 100 marks<br>33.3% of A Level | 1. <b>Addiction</b><br>2. <b>Criminal Behaviours</b><br>3. <b>Stress</b><br>4. <b>Controversies</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Careers and Higher Education Links:

Psychology is a respected academic subject which combines well with a range of subjects, including Humanities and Sciences. It is good for progression to Higher Education and is particularly useful for any profession where an insight into human behaviour is beneficial. It is also accepted as a Science at all universities. Careers include various applied fields of Psychology, (such as Clinical, Occupational, Sport or Educational Psychology) and a wide variety of related areas such as teaching, social work, marketing, policing, media, human resources, child care, medicine, law and nursing.

# Religious Studies

Subject Lead: Mrs Dove

Examination Board : Edexcel

## Religious Studies Course Components

- Ethics
- Philosophy of Religion
- Study of a World Religion

## Assessment

At the end of Upper Sixth there will be three 2 hour written examinations, each worth 33.3% of the A Level marks.

There is no coursework for A Level Religious Studies.

## Ethics

- Ethical debates on environmental issues; conservation, animal rights, climate change and issues of gender, race and disability equality.
- Ethical theories such as Situation Ethics...how could a priest justify attempting to murder Hitler?
- Application of ethical theories to issues involving peace and conflict; just war theory, pacifism and sexual ethics; legal changes and social attitudes.
- Ethical Language - how can emotive words be used to persuade? For example in religion and terrorism.
- Medical Ethics; medical research, abortion, euthanasia, palliative care, personhood, legal and social changes.

In Ethics, we look at Christianity and other world religions as well as secular thinkers such as Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking.



# Religious Studies

## **Philosophy of Religion:**

The content for this paper helps students to explore some of the main philosophical issues and questions about religion, such as classical arguments for the existence of God or the conviction that life has both meaning and purpose. It provides a relevant and challenging context for exploring the beliefs, values and practices that characterise religious communities.

In turn, the paper provides an introduction to logic and a sound basis for understanding and reflecting on the contemporary influence of religion. Students will engage with arguments and debates on religious and non-religious views of life, which focus on some key areas of controversy that shape modern views of the world, such as the problem of evil and suffering.

Students will develop critical analysis skills by engaging in debates on issues such as the value of evidence based on accounts of religious experience. They will analyse and evaluate views of scholars who have contributed to these debates. Students will extend the breadth and depth of their study by considering how religious ideas are expressed and communicated, and how they may differ from other contemporary ways of expressing beliefs about the world – for instance whether religious and scientific language is incompatible or complementary, or whether ideas about life after death are tenable in or relevant to the modern world.

## **Study of a World Religion: Buddhism (subject to change)**

- Beliefs; The 4 Noble Truths, The Eightfold Path, The 3 marks of existence
- The life and work of the Buddha
- Theravada Buddhism
- Mahayana Buddhism
- Meditation; types and purposes
- The development of Buddhism in China and Japan; Pure Land and Zen
- Triratna Buddhism in The West





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