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BIRMINGHAM
SCHOOL



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GCSE Pathways Information

2019-2021

Pathways Options

The University of Birmingham School provides a broad and balanced curriculum which engages and challenges our pupils, so that they achieve the best possible range of qualifications to enable their future aspirations to be fulfilled. The curriculum is designed to offer pupils a diverse and coherent choice of courses and learning experiences, so that they develop skills and knowledge that remain with them long after examinations. This is so that our pupils leave school as confident and independent learners, equipped with both the qualifications and the transferable skills needed to thrive in a changing world.

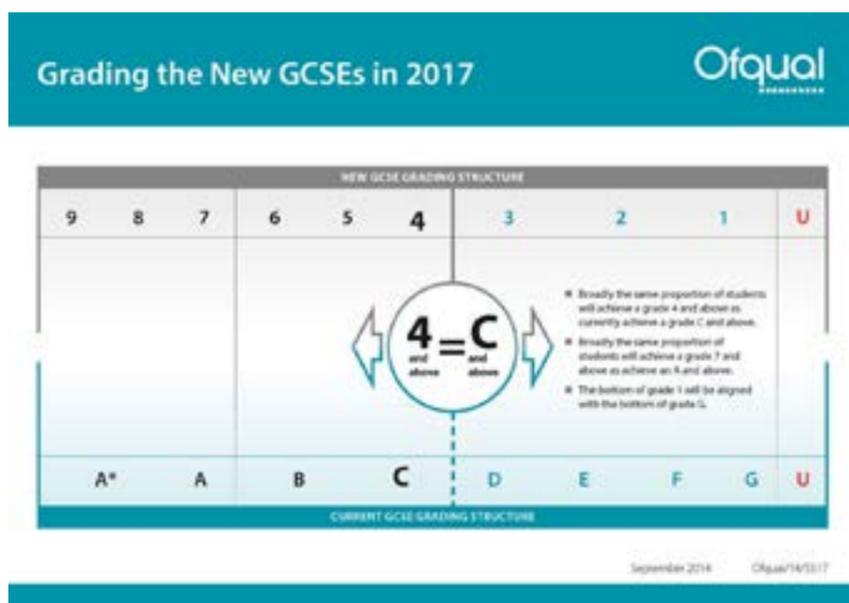
Types of qualifications

The majority of courses that pupils will follow in Key Stage 4 are accredited, which means pupils achieve a qualification that is externally recognised. These qualifications are called level 1 or level 2 awards. Level 1 qualifications include GCSEs at grades 3-1 (D-G using the old grading system). Level 2 qualifications include GCSEs at grades 9-4 (A*-C using the old grading system) as well as some of the Technical Certificate and Cambridge National courses that are on offer.

Curriculum and assessment reforms

New GCSE courses have been introduced across the country in recent years. The new courses have a revised content and use a numbered grade system ranging from 9 at the top to 1 at the bottom to replace the traditional A*-G letter grade system. Ofqual (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation) have stated that nationally, an approximately equal proportion of pupils will achieve a grade 4 and above in the new system as have previously achieved a grade C and above. In other words, the bottom of a grade 4 is aligned with the bottom of the previous grade C. Broadly, the same proportion of pupils

achieve a grade 7 and above as have previously achieved an A-A*, while at the other end of the scale the bottom of a grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of a grade G. This means that under the new system finer grading is used for the upper part of the scale with six grades from 9-4 replacing the previous four grades from A*-C, while broader grading will be used for the lower part of the scale with three grades from 3-1 replacing the four grades from D-G. The diagram below helps to illustrate how the new numbered grade system aligns to the old letter based system.



Assessment reforms (Continued)

The Government has made some other changes to the way that level 2 qualifications are assessed, which have taken effect in recent years. One significant change is that GCSE courses are now assessed linearly, ie all examinations take place at the end of the course. This means that pupils will have the vast majority of their examinations at the end of Year 11 and will not have the opportunity to retake examinations. The other main form of assessment in GCSE courses is called controlled assessment, which is coursework completed in class in Year 10 and/or Year 11 under the supervision of the class teacher. Controlled assessment has been phased out entirely or reduced in its contribution to the overall grade in many of the new GCSE courses, considerably increasing the importance of the examinations at the end of Year 11.

The Core Curriculum

All pupils follow the core curriculum

until the end of Year 11. These courses and the qualifications which they lead to are shown in the table below. The core curriculum alone gives pupils the opportunity of achieving up to six GCSEs. Further information about the core courses is given later in the booklet.

Enrichment

To ensure all of our students and teachers have access to the widest range of learning opportunities, we use an extended school day to deliver a school-wide enrichment programme. This gives everyone the chance to experience something meaningful, regardless of where they're from or their background. At the University of Birmingham School, enrichment is not extra-curricular, it's a core part of our school day. Everyone takes part in enrichment, giving our young people the chance to try out up to eight new things each year. Pupils get the chance to explore something new, discover a passion or purpose they never knew existed, develop deeper relationships with peers and school staff,

and get to practice their character virtues in settings that are completely different from what they are used to.

The importance of English and mathematics

English and mathematics have always been part of the core curriculum and regarded as fundamentally important for all pupils. The value of these subjects for progression at all levels has continued to increase in recent years. For example, achieving grades 9-5 in English and maths is currently part of the entry requirement to the University of Birmingham School Sixth Form and some level 3 college courses, as well as a universal entry requirement for all degree courses at the majority of universities. Literacy and numeracy skills are also essential in any workplace and are highly regarded by employers. Therefore, the University of Birmingham School places great importance on supporting pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes in English and mathematics.

Core Curriculum

| Subject | English | Mathematics | Science | PE | PLAD* | Enrichment |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----|-------|------------|
| Hours per fortnight | 8 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Qualifications | 2 GCSEs ⁽ⁱ⁾ | 1 GCSE | 2-3 GCSEs ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ | N/A | N/A | N/A |

– * Personal learning and development

– ⁽ⁱ⁾ All pupils study GCSE English Language and English Literature.

– ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Pupils follow one of two science pathways:

(1) Triple Award leading to three separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics

(2) Combined Science leading to a double GCSE award.

Curriculum Pathways

All students will have the opportunity to choose three optional subjects from a range of academic and vocational qualifications. Using our knowledge of each individual pupil's aspirations and learning preferences, pupils are guided to one of three core curriculum pathways to maximise their achievement, engagement and enjoyment during Key Stage 4 and best prepare them for progression post-16. Pupils will receive a personalised options form that makes it clear which pathway they will follow. The three pathways are:

Pathway A

Pupils who learn best through a vocational context and enjoy a practical style of learning are guided to this pathway. As part of their timetable, pupils will have five lessons per fortnight to follow a personalised study programme to maximise achievement in key subjects. The nature of the personalised study programme will depend on each pupil's needs, but will include additional support in literacy and numeracy as these key skills are so crucial to future success. To support their decision making, pupils will have a one-to-one guidance meeting before completing their options form. This blend of courses, together with English, Mathematics and Combined Science from the core curriculum, will give pupils the opportunity to achieve up to eight GCSE equivalent grades.

Pathway B

Pupils on this pathway will have three option choices from the full range of courses that are on offer, at least one of which will be either Geography or History (unless in exceptional circumstances). Pupils will also study French as part of our commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum. Together with English, Mathematics and Combined Science from the core curriculum, this pathway will give pupils the opportunity to achieve up to nine GCSEs. This approach aims to maximise the quality rather than the quantity of GCSE outcomes by making the demands of assessment throughout Key Stage 4 more manageable, especially at the end of Year 11 when pupils will have a large number of exams.

Pathway C

Pupils who we believe will confidently manage the demands of studying a large number of courses at Key Stage 4 will follow pathway C which allows three option choices from the full range of courses that are on offer from which we require students to choose a humanities subject from either Geography or History (unless in exceptional circumstances). Pupils will also study French which will together with English, Mathematics, and Triple Award Science from the core curriculum, give pupils the opportunity to achieve up to ten GCSEs.

Key Dates

6 March 2019

Year 9 Pathways Evening

20 March 2019

Final subject choice deadline

Making Choices

Choosing your GCSE options is an exciting moment in your journey through education, and it may be the first time you feel you have real autonomy over the choices you can make. Fortunately, by offering the curriculum that we do, most destinations will still be ready and waiting for you in the future regardless of what subjects you choose, but it might be worth taking a moment to reflect on how you are going to make your choices before you commit pen to paper and tick your options boxes.

.....
 'Many great things start with a simple dream. A dream is a spark that lights the fire to your future.'

The first question to ask yourself is do you have a dream? Are you already passionate about becoming an architect, an archaeologist or an ambassador for United Nations? Do you desperately want to study in America, sail around the world or set up a charity? Do you want to be a musician, a dancer or an athlete? Having a dream enables you to start thinking about having a plan. So what to do next?

Set your sights high – be ambitious, open minded and curious. Do some research. Look on the UCAS website to see what qualifications you will need for a particular degree, or on the Government's 'Find an apprenticeship'

website to look at what apprenticeships are available.

To study Architecture at Cambridge University, for example, you are expected to demonstrate 'creativity' and 'curiosity' and provide a portfolio of your drawings, photographs and sketches and they suggest that Art would be a useful GCSE. If you want to study Medicine at University College London, you'll need a modern foreign language at GCSE at grade 5 (C) or above. If you want to be a lawyer, there is no requirement to have a specific degree in Law – it's your grades and passions for law that are more important.

It's probably much more likely that you haven't got a clue about what you want to do in the future, and this is fine too. If you don't know what you want to do, think about what you enjoy doing. Which subjects bring you the most joy? Which are you most curious about? Which are you finding most success in? Don't make your choices based on which teachers

you like and which classes your friends are in as this will all change in Key Stage 4.

GCSEs are a really important part of your future, but they are only a part of it. Getting the best grades you can is absolutely essential, and in many cases it is the development of character that underpins academic success.

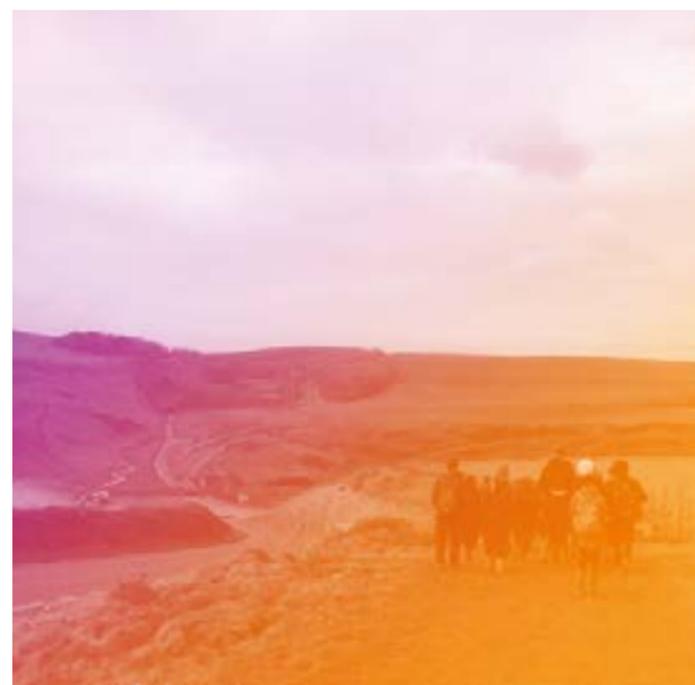
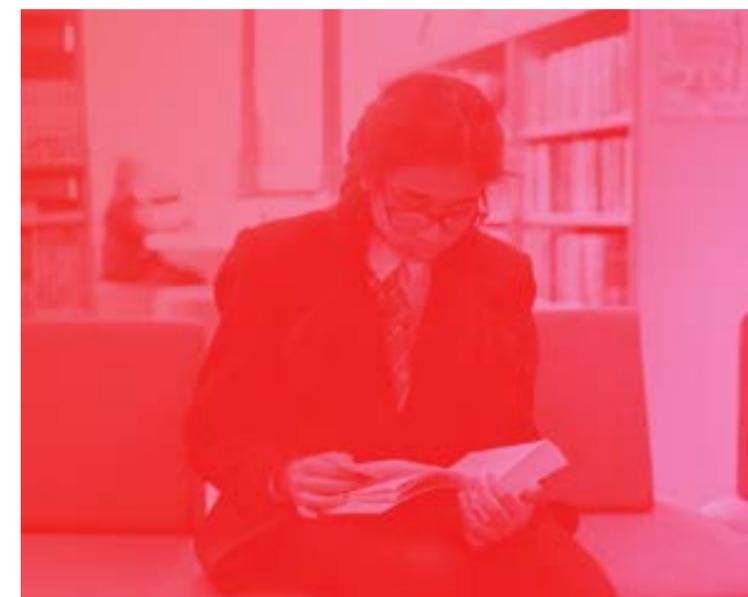
.....
 'If we wonder often, the gift of knowledge will come.'

So make your choices carefully, and use the next few years wisely. Reflect on who you are becoming; find your purpose, be brave and bold and begin your journey to make the world a better place.



Subjects

The University of Birmingham School offers a broad academic curriculum, based around the core subjects of the national curriculum and the subjects regarded as being useful to support application and entry into employment, vocational training and higher education (including into leading universities). Each subject is led by a well-qualified subject leader, supported by a team of inspiring teachers.



English Language

Course Title: GCSE English Language
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The specification is designed to inspire and motivate pupils, providing appropriate stretch and challenge whilst ensuring that the assessment and texts are, as far as possible, accessible to all pupils.

It enables pupils to develop the skills they need to read, understand and analyse a wide range of different texts and write clearly. There are two equally-balanced papers, each assessing reading and writing in an integrated way.

What will be studied?

Pupils will draw upon a range of texts as reading stimulus and engage with creative as well as real and relevant contexts. Pupils will have opportunities to develop higher-order reading and critical thinking skills that encourage genuine enquiry into different topics and themes.

This specification will ensure that pupils can read fluently and write effectively. Pupils will be able to demonstrate a confident control of Standard English and write grammatically correct sentences, deploying figurative language and analysing texts.

How is it assessed?

There are two written examinations. All texts in the examination will be unseen.

- **Paper 1: Section A - Reading (25%)** - one literature fiction text, **Section B - Writing (25%)**
- **Paper 2: Section A - Reading (25%)** - two linked texts: one non-fiction text and one literary non-fiction text, **Section B: Writing (25%)** - writing to present a viewpoint

Both papers are 1 hour 45 minutes long, have 80 marks, each make up 50% of the GCSE (ie are equally weighted) and contain a mixture of short form questions, longer form questions, extended questions and extended writing tasks.

There is also a spoken language component which includes: presenting, responding to questions and feedback and the use of Standard English. This component is teacher-assessed throughout course, marked by a teacher with a separate endorsement (0% weighting of GCSE; graded as Pass, Merit, Distinction or Not Classified).

English Literature

Course Title: GCSE English Literature
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The specification is designed to inspire, challenge and motivate every pupil, regardless of prior attainment. A range of texts is included to cater for the needs of all educational contexts. There are texts that will be familiar, as well as new ones that will inspire pupils. Pupils are tested in an untiered, closed book exam. There are extract-based questions in the assessment of the 19th-century novel and the Shakespeare plays.

What will be studied?

Pupils will study:

- Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel
- Modern texts and poetry

Pupils will also cover the following skills:

- **Literal and inferential comprehension:** understanding a word, phrase or sentence in context; exploring aspects of plot, characterisation, events and settings; distinguishing between what is stated explicitly and what is implied; explaining motivation, sequence of events, and the relationship between actions or events
- **Critical reading:** identifying the theme and distinguishing between themes; supporting a point of view by referring to evidence in the text; recognising the possibility of and evaluating different responses to a text; using understanding of writers' social, historical and cultural contexts to inform evaluation; making an informed personal response that derives from analysis and evaluation of the text
- **Evaluation of a writer's choice of vocabulary, grammatical and structural features:** analysing and evaluating how language, structure, form and presentation contribute to quality and impact; using linguistic and literary terminology for such evaluation
- **Comparing texts:** comparing and contrasting texts studied, referring where relevant to theme, characterisation, context (where known), style and literary quality; comparing two texts critically with respect to the above

How is it assessed?

There are two written examinations:

- **Paper 1: Section A - Shakespeare, Section B - The 19th-century novel,** 64 marks, 40% of GCSE, written exam, 1 hour 45 minutes
- **Paper 2: Section A - Modern texts, Section B - Poetry, Section C - Unseen poetry,** 96 marks, 60% of GCSE, written exam, 2 hours 15 minutes

Mathematics

Course Title: GCSE Mathematics
Exam Board: Pearson Edexcel
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The course is designed to provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment, to give pupils the appropriate mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding to help them progress to a full range of courses in further and higher education. This includes A Level mathematics courses as well as A Level and undergraduate courses in other disciplines such as biology, physics, chemistry, geography and psychology, where the understanding and application of mathematics is crucial.

The aims and objectives of the course is to enable students to:

- Develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts
- Acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems
- Reason mathematically, make deductions and inferences, and draw conclusions
- Comprehend, interpret and communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information and context.

What will be studied?

The course will cover topics under the following content sections:

1. Number
2. Algebra
3. Ratio, proportion and rates of change
4. Geometry and measures
5. Probability
6. Statistics

How is it assessed?

The qualification consists of three equally-weighted written examination papers at either foundation tier or higher tier.

- **Paper 1:** non-calculator assessment
- **Paper 2:** calculator is allowed
- **Paper 3:** calculator is allowed

Each paper is 1 hour and 30 minutes long, and has 80 marks.

The content outlined for each tier will be assessed across all three papers. Each paper has a range of question types; some questions will be set in both mathematical and non-mathematical contexts.

Students are able to take assessments in either the foundation tier (grades 1 to 5) or higher tier (grades 4 to 9, grade 3 allowed).

Pathway B or C only

French

Course Title: GCSE French
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The GCSE French course builds on the skill set developed by our language-learners at Key Stage 3. Pupils hone their skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, with a strong emphasis on grammar and translation. They extend their vocabulary in a wide range of topics, using tools such as Language Perfect to practise and memorise core words and phrases. Over the GCSE course, pupils are exposed to a range of authentic texts and materials, enabling them to access meaning in real-life contexts. Pupils study a variety of French-speaking cultures, learning about the diversity of francophone traditions.

What will be studied?

Pupils study all of the following themes:

Theme 1: Identity and culture - me, my family and friends; technology in everyday life; free-time activities; customs and festivals in French-speaking countries/communities

Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest - home, town, neighbourhood and region; social issues; global issues; travel and tourism

Theme 3: Current and future study and employment - my studies; life at school/college; education post-16; jobs; career choices and ambitions

How is it assessed?

Paper 1: Listening (25% of GCSE) - Understanding and responding to different types of spoken language (written exam)

- Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B: Questions in French, to be answered in French or non-verbally

Paper 2: Speaking (25% of GCSE) - Communicating and interacting effectively in speech for a variety of purposes

Question style: Role-play; photo card; general conversation

Paper 3: Reading (25% of GCSE) - Understanding and responding to different types of written language (written exam)

- Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B: Questions in French, to be answered in French or non-verbally
- Section C: Translation from French into English

Paper 4: Writing (25% of GCSE) - Communicating effectively in writing for a variety of purposes (written exam)

Question style: Message/structured writing task; short passage/open-ended writing task; translation from English into French

Pathway C only

Biology

Course Title: GCSE Biology
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The AQA GCSE biology course begins by covering the content in Year 9 from the following topics: Organisation, cell biology and infection & response. After each topic pupils will complete an end of topic test to help them to assess their own learning.

As well as learning content we will be focusing on three main skills (knowledge & understanding, scientific communication and data analysis) during lessons, just as in Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9.

The course includes a lot of practicals as well as theory. The practicals do not count towards the overall mark but are a required part of the course and there will be questions related to these practicals in the exam.

What will be studied?

The course covers seven main topics with something to suit everyone:

1. Cell biology
2. Organisation
3. Infection and response
4. Bioenergetics
5. Homeostasis and response
6. Inheritance, variation and evolution
7. Ecology

These topics are studied by both the biology and combined science course, with the biology GCSE course studying each topic in more depth.

As well as learning new content, pupils will complete 10 required practicals including: visualising cheek cells under a microscope, investigating the effect of different antiseptics on bacterial growth, and going outside to measure the biodiversity of species in a field.

How is it assessed?

There are two papers covering different topics:

- **Paper 1 assesses topics 1-4:** Cell biology; organisation; infection and response; bioenergetics.
- **Paper 2 assesses topics 5-7:** Homeostasis and response; inheritance, variation and evolution; ecology.

Both papers are 1 hour and 45 minutes long, are out of 100 marks and each make up 50% of the GCSE.

Questions in both papers include: multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open response.

Pathway C only

Chemistry

Course Title: GCSE Chemistry
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Year 9 pupils have already started studying some of the core concepts in the GCSE syllabus, including the structure of atoms and bonding in molecules. These concepts are the basis of the whole of chemistry.

Practical work is at the heart of chemistry, and pupils will continue to use the practical skills developed in KS3 to support and consolidate their theoretical understanding of chemistry, develop investigative skills, and master the use of specialist practical equipment and techniques.

What will be studied?

The course content is divided into ten topics:

1. Atomic structure and the periodic table
2. Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter
3. Quantitative chemistry
4. Chemical changes
5. Energy changes
6. The rate and extent of chemical change
7. Organic chemistry
8. Chemical analysis
9. Chemistry of the atmosphere
10. Using resources

These topics are studied by both the chemistry and combined science course, with the chemistry GCSE course studying each topic in more depth.

How is it assessed?

There are two exam papers covering different topics:

- **Paper 1 assesses topics 1-5:** Atomic structure and the periodic table; bonding, structure, and the properties of matter; quantitative chemistry; chemical changes; energy changes.
- **Paper 2 assesses topics 6-10:** The rate and extent of chemical change; organic chemistry; chemical analysis; chemistry of the atmosphere; using resources.

Both papers are 1 hour 45 minutes long, each make up 50% of the GCSE and contain a mixture of multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open response.

There is no coursework, instead, pupils are required to complete eight required practicals during the course.

Pathway C only

Physics

Course Title: GCSE Physics
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

In this course, pupils will learn about the wonders of the universe, miniscule particles and everything in between, alongside the amazing technological inventions we rely on in daily life. Year 9 pupils have already started studying all of the core topics in the GCSE syllabus, from the highly practical electricity, energy and forces topics, to the more exotic nuclear physics and lifecycle of stars.

Practical work is at the heart of physics, and pupils will continue to use the practical skills developed in KS3 to support and consolidate their theoretical understanding of physics, develop investigative skills, and master the use of specialist practical equipment and techniques.

Maths is the language of physics and 30% of GCSE marks available in the physics paper rely on these skills; Year 9 pupils have recently strengthened their mathematical skills for physics and we will continue to build on this foundation throughout the course.

What will be studied?

The course content is divided into eight topics:

1. Energy
2. Electricity
3. Particle model of matter
4. Atomic structure
5. Forces
6. Waves
7. Magnetism and electromagnetism
8. Space physics (physics course only, not included on combined science course)

These topics are studied by both the physics and combined science course, with the physics GCSE course studying each topic in more depth.

How is it assessed?

There are two papers covering different topics:

- **Paper 1 assesses topics 1-4:** Energy; electricity; particle model of matter; atomic structure
- **Paper 2 assesses topics 5-8:** Waves; magnetism and electromagnetism; space physics

Both papers are 1 hour 45 minutes long, each make up 50% of the GCSE and contain a mixture of multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open response.

There is no coursework, instead, pupils are required to complete eight required practicals during the course.

Pathway A or B only

Combined Science

Course Title: GCSE Combined Science: Trilogy
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Science is a way of investigating, understanding, and explaining our natural, physical world and the wider universe. It involves generating and testing ideas, gathering evidence – including by making observations, carrying out investigations and modelling, and communicating and debating with others – in order to develop scientific knowledge, understanding, and explanations.

The Trilogy course builds upon the exciting work studied in biology, chemistry and physics during Years 7-9, and equips pupils with the key skills that they need to progress to level 3 courses and beyond. Practical work is at the heart of science – there are 21 required practical activities which need to be completed through the Trilogy course.

What will be studied?

The Combined Science: Trilogy course covers the same topics as covered in the separate science qualifications, but there are sections of each topic which are not covered in the Trilogy to such great depth. Please see the individual pages for biology, chemistry and physics for the topic lists.

How is it assessed?

The qualification is a double GCSE which will be graded on a 17-point scale: 1–1 to 9–9, where 9–9 is the best grade.

Pupils will sit six examinations at the end of Year 11 - two for each science. Each exam is 1 hour 15 minutes in length and is made up of multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response questions. Each exam paper is available in higher tier and foundation tier and is made up of 70 marks.

20% of the marks in each paper are based on mathematical skills (1:2:3 ratio for biology, chemistry and physics). So for each single mark attributed to mathematical skills in biology, there must be two marks in chemistry and three marks in physics.

Choices

* Students can either pick Art or Photography, and are then required to work with the Art department to decide which of the two subjects they are best suited to.

Art

Course Title: GCSE Art and Design: Fine Art
Exam Board: OCR
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Art at GCSE is a hugely practical, creative and varied course. The department is lucky enough to have a vast range of equipment enabling Fine Art students to learn and develop skills in drawing, photography (with DSLR cameras), clay work, watercolour experiments and painting, acrylic painting, photoshop, GIFS, drawing, textiles techniques, collage, wire work, etching and lino-printing...to name a few!

The World Economic Forum suggests that the most sought after skills for careers in 2020 include creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, judgement/decision making and cognitive flexibility - all in their top 10. A course such as Art allows students to gain experience in all of these areas, providing plentiful examples for UCAS applications and CVs, irrespective of whether they will continue into a career in the creative industries.

Art creates self-starters and helps develop emotional intelligence. It requires the student to begin setting their own agenda from within themselves, rather than following a set path. The arts develop the broader dimensions and character of the human being alongside the development of practical and technical skills.

Examples of career pathways can be seen by our A-Level Art alumni. Some of them are continuing their study in areas such as architecture, engineering, digital design, fine art, textiles and interior design. For more examples of creative industry pathways visit: <http://creativejourneyuk.org>

What will be studied?

Students will start the course by trying a bit of everything, allowing them to create a wide ranging collection of work alongside building up their skills, knowledge and confidence. From Easter of Year 10 students specialise in their favourite and most successful areas, choosing themes and artists to help them build up a more independent project. To start with, keeping an open mind to all of the techniques is a must!

How is it assessed?

There are two assessed projects:

- The Portfolio (accounts for 60% of the GCSE grade)

Learners complete a body of practical work showing their personal response to a starting point. They study artists, take photographs and experiment with ideas before creating a final piece.

- The 'Externally Set Task' (accounts for 40% of the GCSE grade)

This is Art's equivalent to an exam. Students will be issued a booklet on 2 January from the exam board (OCR), which will provide learners with a number of themes, each with a range of written and visual starting points. Students will be asked to create a project based on one of the options they provide in the booklet in a similar way to the first project, but this time with even more independence. The preparatory project work and the final piece (completed over 10 hours at school) are all marked together.

Photography

Course Title: GCSE Art and Design: Photography
Exam Board: OCR
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Photography at GCSE is a hugely practical, creative and varied course. The UoBS Art Department is lucky enough to have the most amazing range of equipment so that students can learn to use digital media using DSLR cameras, photoshop, GIFs and video equipment alongside lighting equipment.

Photography is about looking, learning, thinking and communicating ideas. It inspires creative thinkers. Photography means 'drawing with light' and that is what photographers do when they take a picture. Many photographers have explored various techniques to create images that make a personal statement about things that have interested or concerned them. The most exciting aspect of photography is that you are capturing the world as you see it.

What will be studied?

Students will start the course by experimenting with different types of photographic equipment alongside creative applications on computers and tablets, with the aim of building up their skills, knowledge and confidence. They will start to specialise in their favourite and most successful areas as the course goes on. To start with, keeping an open mind to all of the techniques and processes is a must!

As the course develops, students will create two main projects for their GCSE. They will be given a theme that they will need to research and think of ideas for, they will need to find artists to inspire their ideas, take a wide range of photographs to help them with their theme's development and eventually create a personal 'final piece' in a digital media format. There are a variety of specialist areas to choose from:

- Documentary photography; Photo-journalism; Studio photography; Location photography; Experimental photography; Installation; Moving image: film, video and animation.

Work is not limited to one area of study.

How is it assessed?

There are two assessed projects:

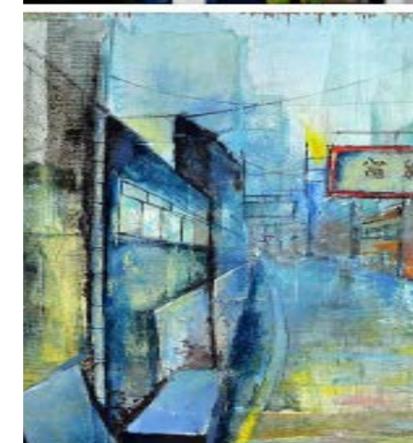
- The Portfolio (accounts for 60% of the GCSE grade)

Learners complete a body of practical work showing their personal response to a starting point. They study artists, take photographs and experiment with ideas before creating a final piece using digital media.

- The 'Externally Set Task' (accounts for 40% of the GCSE grade)

This is the equivalent to an exam. Students will be issued a booklet on 2 January from the exam board (OCR), which will provide learners with a number of themes, each with a range of written and visual starting points. Students will be asked to create a project based on one of the options they provide in the booklet in a similar way to the first project, but this time with even more independence. The preparatory project work and the final piece (completed over 10 hours at school) are all marked together.

The Photography GCSE (9-1) qualification is 100% non-exam assessment. This means that both the Portfolio and the Externally Set Task (question paper) are 100% internally marked and externally moderated.



Computer Science

Course Title: GCSE Computer Science
Exam Board: OCR
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

So far pupils will have had the opportunity to learn a number of different aspects of computer science. Two of the most important skills which pupils have been developing is the ability to solve problems and to code solutions to those problems. This is the heart and soul of this GCSE. We will be continuing work on Python and expanding it out into new and interesting directions. This will include creating games using Pygame, working on micro:bits (in Python) and many other interesting projects. As pupils' confidence in programming increases so will the possibilities of what we can create.

Lessons will be split into two parts: theory and lab sessions. During theory sessions pupils will learn more about how computers work and during lab sessions, pupils will work on computational thinking and programming.

Pupils who enjoy learning about how computers work, programming in Python or solving problems will get a lot from this course. Programming skills are in high demand and many STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers are increasingly needing people who can write code.

What will be studied?

The course covers three main areas:

1. Computer Systems

- System architectures
- Computer memory
- Storage devices
- Wired and wireless networking
- Network topologies, protocols and layers.
- System security and encryption
- System software including operating systems
- Ethical, legal, cultural and environmental impacts of computing

2. Computational thinking, algorithms and programming

- Algorithms
- Programming techniques
- Producing robust programs
- Translators and facilities of programming languages
- Data representation including binary

3. Programming project

In the programming project, OCR will issue a task which students must code a solution for. Pupils will have 20 hours of lesson time to complete the task.

- Analysing a complex problem
- Designing solutions in code
- Developing and producing robust code
- Testing and evaluation solutions

How is it assessed?

There are two papers covering different topics, and a non-exam element:

- **Paper 1:** Computer Systems (40%)
- **Paper 2:** Computational thinking, algorithms and programming (40%)
- **Non-exam assessment:** Programming project (20%)*

* The non-exam assessment (NEA) will be done in class under controlled conditions. Pupils will not have access to the internet during this task.

Both exam papers are 1 hour and 45 minutes long and are out of 100 marks.

Design and Technology

Course Title: GCSE Design and Technology
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

GCSE Design and Technology will prepare pupils to participate confidently and successfully in an increasingly technological world. Pupils will gain awareness and learn from wider influences on Design and Technology including historical, social, cultural, environmental and economic factors. Pupils will get the opportunity to work creatively when designing and making and apply technical and practical expertise. The GCSE allows pupils to study core technical and designing and making principles, including a broad range of design processes, materials techniques and equipment. They will also have the opportunity to study specialist technical principles in greater depth. Pupils will also develop their knowledge of famous designers and companies.

Links to maths: Pupils learn to apply the following mathematical skills: 1. Arithmetic and numerical computation; 2. Handling data; 3 Graphs; 4. Geometry and trigonometry.

Links to science: Pupils learn to and apply the following scientific knowledge and skills: 1. Use scientific vocabulary, terminology and definitions; 2. Life cycle assessment and recycling; 3. Using materials.

What will be studied?

- **Core technical principles:** new and emerging technologies, energy generation and storage, developments in new materials, systems approach to designing, mechanical devices, materials and their working properties.
- **Specialist technical principles:** selection of materials or components, forces and stresses, ecological and social footprint, sources and origins, using and working with materials, stock forms, types and sizes, scales of production, specialist techniques and processes, surface treatments and finishes.
- **Designing and making principles:** Pupils should know and understand that all design and technology activities take place within a wide range of contexts. They should also understand how the prototypes they develop must satisfy wants or needs and be fit for their intended use, for example: the home, school, work or leisure.

How is it assessed?

There is a written exam and a non examination assessment for this subject:

- **Paper 1:** Core technical principles; specialist technical principles; designing and making principles

The exam paper is 2 hours long, out of 100 marks and makes up 50% of the GCSE. The examination will include a mixture of multiple choice, short answer and extended response questions assessing a breadth and depth of technical knowledge and understanding.

- **Non-exam assessment (NEA):** Design and make project, this includes a portfolio of work and a final prototype

Pupils have approximately 30-35 hours for the project. The non-exam assessment is out of 100 marks, and makes up 50% of the GCSE. Pupils will produce a prototype and portfolio of evidence. Work will be marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.

Geography

Course Title: GCSE Geography: Investigating Geographical Issues
Exam Board: Edexcel (B)
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Geography helps us to make sense of the world around us. It is hands on, it is relevant and it is fun. We will study a range of topics such as urban issues, world development, extreme environments, rivers and hazards, to name but a few. The course will give pupils the chance to get to grips with some of the big questions which affect our world and understand the social, economic and physical forces and processes which shape and change our world. Fieldwork, or working outside the classroom is a really important part of geography. This will be a brilliant opportunity for pupils to experience some of the things they have learnt about in class, see things differently and, of course, have fun. The course provides an engaging real-world focus which supports pupils' progression to A Level.

What will be studied?

Content

- Hazardous Earth
- Development dynamics
- Challenges of an urbanising world
- The UK's evolving physical and human landscapes (Coastal change and conflict, river processes and pressures, dynamic urban areas))
- People and the biosphere
- Forests under threat
- Consuming energy resources

Skills

- Making a geographical decision
- Geographical fieldwork investigations

How is it assessed?

There are three exam papers, covering different topics:

- **Paper 1: Global Geographical Issues** - Hazardous Earth; development dynamics; challenges of an urbanising world

37.5% of the qualification, 94 marks

- **Paper 2: UK Geographical Issues** - The UK's evolving physical landscape; the UK's evolving human landscape; geographical investigations

37.5% of the qualification, 94 marks

- **Paper 3: People and Environment Issues** - Making geographical decisions; people and the biosphere; forests under threat; consuming energy resources; making a geographical decision

25% of the qualification, 64 marks

Each paper is a written exam, taking 1 hour and 30 minutes. The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, extended writing questions and calculations.

* German is a guided choice, where agreement must be obtained from the MFL department that the pupil has an aptitude for languages.

German

Course Title: GCSE German
Exam Board: AQA
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

This is an exciting new opportunity to take a second GCSE in a Modern Foreign Language, in addition to studying French at GCSE. Given that the main language studied at KS3 is currently French, students who choose his option will be expected to commit to two enrichment blocks of KS3 level German at the end of Year 9 to ensure thorough preparation for starting the GCSE course at the beginning of Year 10.

The GCSE German course builds on the skill-set developed by our language-learners at Key Stage 3. Students hone their skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, with a strong emphasis on grammar and translation. They extend their vocabulary in a wide range of topics, using tools such as Language Perfect to practise and memorise core words and phrases. Over the GCSE course, students are exposed to a range of authentic texts and materials, enabling them to access meaning in real-life contexts. Students study a variety of German-speaking cultures, learning about the diversity of traditions in these countries.

What will be studied?

Students study all of the following themes:

Theme 1: Identity and culture

- Topic 1: Me, my family and friends
- Topic 2: Technology in everyday life
- Topic 3: Free-time activities
- Topic 4: Customs and festivals in German-speaking countries/communities

Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest

- Topic 1: Home, town, neighbourhood and region
- Topic 2: Social issues
- Topic 3: Global issues
- Topic 4: Travel and tourism

Theme 2: Current and future study and employment

- Topic 1: My studies
- Topic 2: Life at school/college
- Topic 3: Education post-16
- Topic 4: Jobs, career choices and ambitions

How is it assessed?

- **Paper 1: Listening (25% of GCSE)**
Understanding and responding to different types of spoken language (Written exam); Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally; Section B: Questions in German, to be answered in German or non-verbally

- **Paper 2: Speaking (25% of GCSE)**
Communicating and interacting effectively in speech for a variety of purposes; Role-play; photo card; general conversation

- **Paper 3: Reading (25% of GCSE)**
Understanding and responding to different types of written language (Written exam); Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally; Section B: Questions in German, to be answered in German or non-verbally; Section C: Translation from German into English

- **Paper 4: Writing (25% of GCSE)**
Communicating effectively in writing for a variety of purposes (Written exam); Message/Structured writing task; Short passage/Open-ended writing task; Translation from English into German

History

Course Title: GCSE History B (Schools History Project)
Exam Board: OCR
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Disease, espionage, slavery, polar bears and Hitler. These are six words which could sum up our course here at UoBS. Yet that would hide the true purpose of our GCSE History course, which is to help pupils understand how the actions of people can change the world, sometimes for the better and a lot for the worse. Our course helps pupils to understand periods of change in the past so that they can be prepared to adapt to change in the future. Yet apart from these important lessons, pupils also improve their ability to research, analyse and communicate which they will be using no matter what they do in life, long after they have forgotten the percentage of people who died from the Black Death. Lessons will be structured around pupils investigating real historical questions using the actual evidence left to us and they will then construct an answer to these questions.

What will be studied?

Unit 1: The People's Health (c.1250-today)

- How far did people's health change during the Medieval and Early Modern Periods?
- How far has people's health changed since 1750?

Unit 2: The Elizabethans (1580-1603)

- How secure was Elizabeth the First's power during her reign?
- Was Elizabethan England really a 'Merrie' time?

Unit 3: History Around Us

- What can we understand from the remaining evidence about Dudley Castle's long history?
- Including looking at its uses as a medieval castle, a Tudor manor house, a Civil War fort, an industrial site and a zoo

Unit 4: The making of modern America (1789-1900)

- Why did America expand its territory following its declaration of independence until the Civil War?
- How far was late nineteenth-century America really the home of the 'American Dream'?

Unit 5: Living under Nazi rule (1933-1945)

- Why was Hitler able to establish himself as dictator of Germany?
- How far did Nazi rule change people's lives?

How is it assessed?

There are three exam papers, covering different topics:

- **Paper 1:** 'The People's Health (c.1250-today)' and 'The Elizabethans (1580-1603)', 1 hour 45 mins exam
- **Paper 2:** 'History Around Us', 1 hour exam
- **Paper 3:** 'The making of modern America (1789-1900)' and 'Living under Nazi rule (1933-1945)', 1 hour 45 mins exam

Music

Course Title: GCSE Music
Exam Board: Edexcel
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The course combines development of pupils' performance, composition and listening skills. It is an opportunity to study a huge range of different styles of music from around the world and throughout the last 500 years. Pupils will analyse this music in depth as well as lots of wider listening to broaden their understanding of musical traditions. They will perform solo and in groups, developing arrangements of songs and performing to the class regularly. They will also work on their composing skills, culminating in pupils writing two complete original pieces of music.

What will be studied?

There are three main skills that pupils will be studying:

1. **Performance:** developing performing skills through practice, performances and workshops both as a solo performer and in groups.
2. **Composition:** learning and developing techniques for composing music in a range of musical styles. Pupils will learn how to create and develop melodic ideas, how to structure a piece of music and how to use harmony in composition, as well as how to exploit the abilities of different instruments and ensembles.
3. **Listening:** studying a range of 'set works' – specific pieces of music that we will analyse in detail. These range from compositions by J.S. Bach to songs by Queen and Afro Celt Soundsystem to the soundtrack from Star Wars. Pupils will also work on their aural listening skills – using their ears to identify and analyse features of music, including intervals, cadences and chords, as well as stylistic features.

How is it assessed?

The course is assessed through both coursework and a written exam:

- 30% of the grade is awarded for **solo or ensemble performance**. Pupils will perform at least two pieces, totalling at least 4 minutes of music. This could be on any instrument, and pupils will be preparing their performance pieces throughout the course.
- 30% of the grade is awarded for **composition**. Pupils will compose two pieces of music, one to a set brief (eg 'compose a piece of music for a sci-fi film') and one free composition (pupils choose exactly what they do).
- 40% of the grade is awarded for the **1 hour 45 minutes listening/ appraising exam**. This is a written exam in which pupils will answer questions on the set works they have studied, as well as an unfamiliar piece of music.

Physical Education

Course Title: GCSE PE
Exam Board: OCR
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Physical Education at GCSE is an opportunity to immerse passionate young people in the world of sport. This course follows an academic journey that allows pupils to critically analyse and evaluate physical performance and apply their experience of practical activities.

Within theory lessons, the course will equip pupils with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to develop and maintain their performance in physical activities and understand the benefits to health, fitness and well-being, whilst linking this theory to their own sporting lives.

The practical content aims to physically challenge pupils to develop and apply advanced skills in a range of team and individual performances. Pupils will document, analyse and evaluate their improvement in at least three sports over time.

This course is for the committed and enthusiastic sportsperson who has a genuine interest in how to better their performance through studying components of sport science - physiology, biomechanics, and psychology.

What will be studied?

Unit 1A – Applied anatomy and physiology and physical training - theory (30%) - Applied anatomy and physiology (skeletal, muscular, cardiovascular and respiratory systems; movement analysis using biomechanics; short and long term effects of exercise on the body systems); physical training (components of fitness; fitness testing; principles of training; methods of training; preventing injury).

Unit 1B – Sociocultural influences, sports psychology, health, fitness and well-being - theory (30%) - socio-cultural influences (engagement patterns of different social groups in sport; commercialisation of sport; ethical and socio-cultural issues); sports psychology (goal setting; mental preparation; classification of movement and skill); health, fitness and well-being (nutrition; diet; physical, social, emotional well-being).

Unit 2 – Practical (30%) - Develop performance in three activities from the approved list: one from the individual list, one from the team list, one from either list.

Unit 3 – Analysing and evaluating performance (10%) - A coursework project that requires pupils to apply theoretical knowledge to practical examples of sport, demonstrating understanding through written (essay based), statistical (data analysis, graphs, percentage improvements) and performance evidenced detail.

How is it assessed?

Non-exam assessment components (40% total)

1. Analysis and evaluation of practical performance (EAP) coursework project.
2. Practical performance in three sports (practical moderation with other schools and an examiner).

Examined assessment components (60% total)

- **Paper 1:** Applied anatomy and physiology; physical training (30%, 1 hour)
- **Paper 2:** Sociocultural influences; sports psychology; health, fitness and well-being (30%, 1 hour)

Religious Studies

Course Title: GCSE Religious Studies
Exam Board: WJEC Eduqas
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The aim this course is to develop our understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs, such as atheism and humanism. We will use key religious texts and other sources of wisdom and authority to explore belief, teaching and practice, as well as trying to develop our own values beliefs and attitudes. Over the two years we will engage with question of belief, values, meaning, purpose, truth, and their influence on human life.

This course will deepen pupils' understanding of the relationship between people as they become aware of common and divergent views in different traditions. We will give pupils the opportunity to understand more about the world, the religious challenges it faces, and their own place within that world.

What will be studied?

This course is divided into three sections.

50% of the course focuses on **moral and religious responses to relationships, life and death, good and evil and human rights**. This will be applying and exploring Christian and Islamic responses to these issues, as well as non-religious beliefs such as atheism and humanism. This is called Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World.

25% of the course is a study of the **beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity**. This includes the nature of God, creation, Jesus, the afterlife, worship, pilgrimage and celebrations, Christianity in Britain and around the world.

25% of the course focuses on the **beliefs, teachings and practices of Islam**. This includes the nature of Allah, prophethood, angels, the afterlife, the foundations of faith in Sunni and Shi'a Islam, jihad and festivals.

How is it assessed?

There are three exam papers, covering different topics:

- **Paper 1:** Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World
2 hour exam, worth 50% of marks
- **Paper 2:** Study of Christianity
1 hour exam, worth 25% of marks
- **Paper 3:** Study of Islam
1 hour exam, worth 25% of marks

All exam papers will assess how well pupils can explain what they have learned, how clearly they can debate a controversial issue, and spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Hospitality and Catering

Course Title: Level 1/2 Technical Award in Hospitality and Catering
Exam Board: Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

The WJEC Level 1/2 Award in Hospitality and Catering has been designed to support learners in schools who want to learn about this vocational sector and the potential it can offer them for their careers or further study. It provides learners with a core depth of knowledge about the hospitality and catering industry while enabling learners to develop different cooking techniques, methods and skills.

What will be studied?

The course is broken down into two units:

Unit 01 - The Hospitality and Catering Industry

This unit aims to introduce learners to the hospitality and catering industry, which is a major employer of people in the UK. In this unit, learners will gain knowledge about the different types of hospitality and catering businesses, how they operate and the staff that are employed within these businesses.

They will also learn about factors that affect the success of a business within the hospitality and catering industry including how modern businesses use social media, sustainability and emerging and innovative cooking techniques to influence consumers. This unit also covers issues such as food-related causes of ill health, health and safety and food allergies.

Unit 02 - Hospitality and Catering in Action

In this unit learners will gain knowledge of the nutritional needs of a range of people including babies, teenagers and adults. Learners will be required to plan and make a range of nutritious dishes that are suitable for a wide target audience and will learn how to present these dishes to restaurant standard. Throughout the course learners will further develop safe and hygienic food preparation and cooking skills.

How is it assessed?

As a vocational Level 2 qualification, students will be graded Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction* which are broadly equivalent to GCSE grades 4, 5/6, 7 and 8 respectively.

Unit 2 is internally assessed with unit 1 being assessed by an external examination. The overall weighting of assessment is 60% internal (Unit 2) to 40% external (Unit 1).

For the internal assessment, each learner must complete a portfolio around a given brief. All of the Assessment Criteria must be met in order to gain a grade. A practical must also be completed as part of this assessment. Learners will use the knowledge gained over the duration of the course to carry out preparation, cooking and presentation of the dishes.

External assessments are set and marked by WJEC. The assessment assesses learners' knowledge and understanding based on the content of Unit 1 of the qualification. The external assessment is administered under specified assessment conditions and will last for 90 minutes.

Sports Studies

Course Title: Level 2 Cambridge National: Sports Studies
Exam Board: OCR
Course Specification: [Click here](#)

What is the course like?

Sports Studies is a course which focuses on developing a diverse skill set including: leadership, communication, problem solving, team work, evaluation and analysis which are learned and applied throughout the qualification, ready to be utilised in many other educational and employment settings.

Pupils will apply this sector-based focus to a range of sporting and physical education themes. Pupils have the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge about different types of sports and physical activity, skill development and sport leadership to their own practical performances. They will learn about contemporary issues in sport such as funding, participation, ethics and role models, and the media. Pupils will develop an appreciation of the importance of sport locally and nationally, different ways to become involved and how this shapes the sporting industry.

What will be studied?

Across the course, pupils will study 4 different units.

Unit 1: Contemporary issues in sport

The issues that affect participation; the role of sport in promoting values; the importance of hosting major events in sport; the role of national governing bodies.

Unit 3: Sports leadership

Know the qualities, responsibilities and styles of sports leaders; planning, delivering, and evaluating a sports session.

Unit 2: Developing sports skills

Using skills, techniques and tactics in both an individual and a team based sport; officiating in sport; applying methods to support performance improvements.

Unit 4: Sport and the media

Know how sport is covered across the media; the positive effects of the media; the negative effects of the media; the relationship between sport and the media; evaluating media coverage of sport.

How is it assessed?

There is a combination of assessment types, including internal assessment and external examination:

- Unit 1 - external examination (25%)
- Unit 2 - internally assessed written task (25%)
- Unit 3 - internally assessed written task (25%)
- Unit 4 - internally assessed written task (25%)

The overall weighting of assessment is 75% internal to 25% external.

Externally examined assessment: Unit 1 - exam paper (1 hour) comprising of short answer questions, extended responses and some multiple choice questions.

As a vocational Level 2 qualification, pupils will be graded Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction* which are broadly equivalent to GCSE grades 4, 5/6, 7 and 8 respectively.