



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM  
SCHOOL



# YEAR 9 Pathways

AT UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL

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# Your Pathway Options

You are now at a point in School where you will need to choose your option subjects for Year 10 and 11. This booklet is designed to help you, and your family, in that process. Choosing your GCSE subjects is an important time for you and it is an exciting time, but you may find some of those decisions tricky. There is a lot of support and advice available to help you. This booklet, along with the online materials provided for you, are the best places to start. Your subject teachers, your tutor, your Year Lead, Pastoral Manager, and other members of staff across our School are also available to offer you advice.

Please read this booklet carefully along with the online videos which have been provided for you.

## Key dates for you to remember:

- Year 9 Parents' Evening: Thursday 12 March 2026.
- Final Subject Choice Deadline: Thursday 19 March 2026.

## The Process:

### February

- Read and engage with both this booklet and the online platform available to you.
- Talk to your family and subject teachers about what you may like to study.
- Reflect on your January assessments: what are your strengths and areas for development?
- You will receive your options online form after February half term.

### March

- Attend Parents' Evening on 12 March 2026.
- Complete the options online form by 19 March 2026.

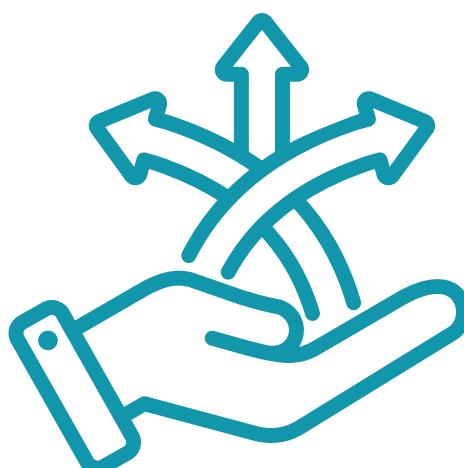
### April until the end of Year 9

- Continue to work hard in all of your subjects; you will not find out your final GCSE subjects until the timetable has been completed in July 2026 and not everyone will get all of their preferred choices.

I hope you find this booklet informative and useful; I wish you all the best as you carefully consider your GCSE options.



Mrs G Walker  
Deputy Principal.



# Our Curriculum

**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. Our pupils leave school as confident and independent learners, equipped with both the qualifications and the transferable skills needed.**

## What qualifications do we offer?

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.

GCSE courses are now largely exam based, except in particular subjects. GCSE courses use a numbered grade system ranging from 9 at the top to 1 at the bottom (a grade 8 is broadly what an A\* used to be, a Grade 4 is broadly what a Grade C used to be).

We also offer three vocational courses. Vocational courses are GCSE equivalents, meaning the qualifications are considered as having the same value as GCSEs. Vocational courses are examined using both non-examined assessment (coursework) and examinations. These courses are measured at a Distinction\*, Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

## The Core Curriculum

All pupils follow the core curriculum:

Subject	English	Mathematics	Science	Core PE	L4L*	Enrichment
Hours per fortnight	8	8	12	2	2	4
Qualifications	2 GCSEs**	1 GCSE	2-3 GCSEs***	N/A	N/A	N/A

\*Learning for Life: personal learning and development.

\*\*All pupils study GCSE English Language and English Literature.

\*\*\*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.

## The English Baccalaureate

Pupils are encouraged by the Government to follow courses in subject areas that lead to the English Baccalaureate.

The subjects are:

- GCSE English Language or GCSE English Literature.
- GCSE Mathematics.
- GCSE Combined or Triple Science (GCSE Computer Science can also be counted).
- GCSE Foreign Language.
- GCSE Geography or GCSE History.

In order to meet the English Baccalaureate standard, pupils must gain a pass in all of these 5 subject areas.

### **The importance of English and mathematics**

English and mathematics have always been a 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. University of Birmingham School places great importance on supporting pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes in English and mathematics.

### **Science**

Pupils will either study Triple Science (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics separately) or Combined Science. Pupils studying Combined Science will still study Biology, Chemistry, and Physics and be examined in all three areas, but will achieve a Double Grade in Science overall. Pupils will be told whether they are studying Triple Sciences or Combined Science. Pupils interested in studying medicine or medical-related qualifications at Higher Education can still do so by studying Combined Science.

### **Enrichment**

Enrichment remains an important part of our core curriculum in Years 10 and 11. In enrichment time, 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 enrich their wider understanding of the world they live in. Pupils can also talk about their enrichment in future applications.

# Curriculum Pathways

All pupils will have the opportunity to choose three or four 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 four 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 four 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. 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 four 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). Together with English, Mathematics and Combined Science from the core curriculum, this pathway will give pupils the opportunity to achieve up to nine GCSEs.

## Pathway C

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 or, for some, German as part of our commitment to foreign languages and 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.

## Pathway D

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

Pathway A	Pathway B	Pathway C	Pathway D
Maths & English	Maths & English	Maths & English	Maths & English
Double Science	Double Science	Double Science	Separate Science
Extra Maths & English	4 choices - one of which should be Geography or History (you may pick a language if you wish)	Languages	Languages
3 choices		3 choices - one of which should be Geography or History	3 choices - one of which should be Geography or History
8 GCSEs	9 GCSEs	9 GCSEs	10 GCSEs

# Making Choices

Choosing your GCSE preferences 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 to what you want to study.

The first question to ask yourself is: do you have a dream or idea about what you might want to do in the future? It doesn't matter if you don't, but if you do then this would be a good place to start. For example, to study Architecture at Cambridge University 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 or above.

Think about what you might want to do in the future. Use the 'Online Resources' section on page 6 to help you with this.

## What if you don't know what you want to do in the future?

Not knowing what you want to do in the future isn't a problem at all. You have a long time to consider what career you may want to do. Consider these questions when thinking about your GCSEs:

- What do you enjoy?
- How is the course assessed (i.e. do you prefer exams or coursework)?
- What subjects are you good at?
- What subjects inspire you when you read this booklet and watch the online videos?
- Which subjects are you most curious about?
- Do you have a balance of subjects (i.e. can you demonstrate all of your skills across the subjects you are studying?)

## Do not:

- Choose a subject because you like the teacher: they may not be teaching you.
- Choose a subject because your friends are doing it: you may not be in their class.

Set your sights high – be ambitious, open minded, and curious. Do your research.

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. 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.

## Finally and most importantly...

Please be aware that whilst we will do everything we can to match you up with the courses you want to study, there will be some limitations which mean we cannot guarantee you will get your chosen preferences. Some courses are likely to be very popular and therefore spaces may be limited (Photography, for example, tends to be oversubscribed). In some subjects, we are only able to offer a set number of places (for example, in Hospitality and Catering and DT). German is only available to you if you have studied it in Years 8 and 9. This means:

- It is important to complete your Options Form by the deadline of the 19 March. Those pupils who miss this deadline will be placed into their classes after the rest of the cohort, so the chances of getting all of your chosen options will be lower.
- It is important to rank your preferences carefully. It may well be that we cannot meet your chosen top three options. In this case, we will look at your fourth choice (and in rare circumstances, we may need to look at your fifth choice). Make sure you consider and complete all five of your preferences and that these are subjects you'd like to study.

# Online Resources

Please use these online resources to help you pick your options.



## Unifrog

All pupils will have an email from unifrog allowing you to create a password for your account. If you don't have this, visit <https://www.unifrog.org/sign-in> and then click "forgotten password" to edit.

**Careers library**

✗ Careers favoured

**Go to tool >**

## Careers Library

Use the Careers Library on unifrog to search for any careers you are interested in hearing further about. For each career, you will find a profile with further information about it. You will also find information on entry requirements and what kind of degree or qualification you may need to follow a particular career.

**Careerpilot**

## Careerpilot

Career Pilot is another useful site you can use. This does not require a log-in – just head to <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk>

**Careerpilot**

All info ▾

Jobs

**What you'll do**

**Routes into this job**

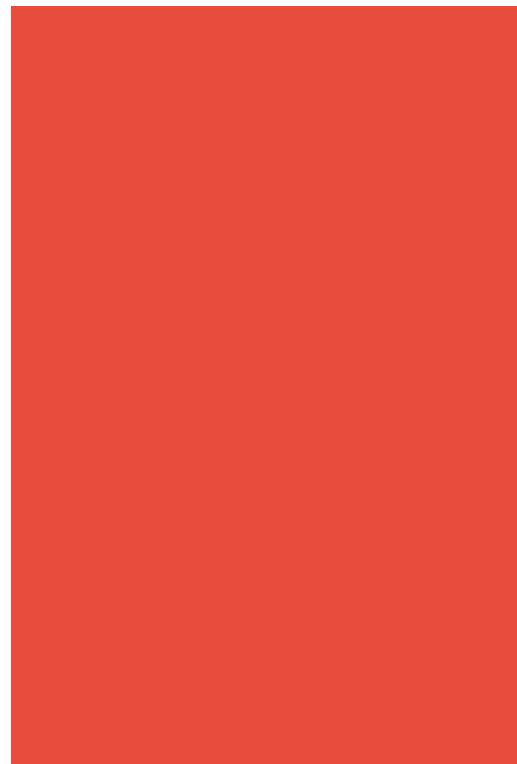
Here, you will find quizzes to help make you consider future pathway options. If you click "Jobs" on the top bar, you will also find information about careers and what sorts of GCSEs you need to get into this career.

The vast majority of jobs do not specify certain GCSE qualifications. Most want to see a good range of GCSEs including English and mathematics. So if you're unsure what you want to do or you change your mind, the GCSE Pathways we have here will help you access almost every career.



# Core Subjects

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.



# Biology Pathway D only

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:

- Cell biology.
- Organisation.
- Infection and response.
- Bioenergetics.
- Homeostasis and response.
- Inheritance, variation and evolution.
- 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: Cell biology; organisation; infection and response; bioenergetics.

**Paper 2:** assesses: 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.

# Chemistry Pathway D only

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 covers seven main topics with something to suit everyone:

- Atomic structure and the periodic table.
- Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter.
- Quantitative chemistry.
- Chemical changes.
- Energy changes.
- The rate and extent of chemical change.
- Organic chemistry.
- Chemical analysis.
- Chemistry of the atmosphere.
- 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: Atomic structure and the periodic table, bonding, structure, and the properties of matter, quantitative chemistry, chemical changes, energy changes.

**Paper 2:** assesses: 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.

# Physics Pathway D only

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, minuscule particles and everything in between, alongside the amazing technological inventions we rely on in daily life. By Year 9, pupils have already started studying all of the core topics featured in the GCSE syllabus, from the highly practical electricity, energy, and forces topics to the more exotic nuclear physics and lifecycle of stars. GCSE study builds on KS3 study, developing previously taught topics with mathematical models and discussions of theory application.

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:

- Energy.
- Electricity.
- Particle model of matter.
- Atomic structure.
- Forces.
- Waves.
- Magnetism and electromagnetism.
- 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: Energy, electricity, particle model of matter, atomic structure.

**Paper 2:** assesses: 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.

# Combined Science Pathway A, B, and C only

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 to 9, where 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.

# 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 communicate in written and spoken language. There are two papers, each assessing reading and writing in an integrated way. Pupils also complete a non-examined assessment in spoken language. The course provides a strong foundation upon which to build further academic and vocational study and employment, helping pupils progress to a full range of courses in further and higher education.

## 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. For GCSE English language you will learn to:

- Read a wide range of texts fluently and with good understanding.
- Read critically and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing.
- Write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately.
- Use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately.
- Acquire and apply a wide vocabulary alongside knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.
- Listen to and understand spoken language, and use spoken Standard English effectively. Spoken language will be reported as a separate grade on the pupil's certificate.

## How is it assessed?

There are two written examinations at the end of Year 11. All texts used in the examination will be unseen. Examination results will be graded overall from 1-9.

**Paper 1:** Explorations in Creative Reading & Writing 80 marks; 50% of GCSE; written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes.

Section A: Reading Questions on an unseen 20th or 21st century fiction extract. (40 marks).

Section B: Descriptive or Narrative Writing. (40 marks).

**Paper 2:** Non-fiction Texts. 80 marks; 50% of GCSE; written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes.

Section A: Reading based on two linked non-fiction sources from different time periods. (40 marks).

Section B: Pupils complete on extended writing task based on the reading extracts. (40 marks).

# English Literature

Course Title: GCSE English Literature

Exam Board: AQA

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## What is the course like?

The specification is designed to be demanding, rigorous, inclusive, and empowering. Pupils will read a wide range of classic literature fluently and with good understanding, and make connections across their reading; they will learn to evaluate texts critically, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas; they will appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage and learn to write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English. They will acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including grammatical terminology, and other literary and linguistic terms they will use to criticise and analyse what they read. Pupils are tested in an untiered, closed book exam. There are extract-based questions in the assessment of the 19th-century novel and of the Shakespeare plays.

## What will be studied?

- Shakespeare and Post-1914 Literature (Paper 1).
- We study Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare and An Inspector Calls by JB Priestley.
- 19th-century Novel and Poetry since 1789 (Paper 2).
- We study A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens
- We study AQA's collection of poetry called Worlds and Lives.

## How is it assessed?

There are two examinations at the end of Year 11. Examination results will be graded overall from 1 – 9.

**Paper 1:** written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, with two sections:

Section A: Shakespeare and 19th-Century Novel. You answer one essay question on Romeo and Juliet, based on a provided extract. You analyse the extract and link it to the whole play. Pupils can revise by learning quotations and re-reading key parts of the text. (34 marks)

Section B: A Christmas Carol. You answer one question on A Christmas Carol, again based on a printed extract and requiring you to link the extract to the whole novella. It is also a closed book task. (30 marks)

**Paper 2:** written exam: 2 hour 15 minutes, with three sections:

Section A: Modern Texts (An Inspector Calls) You answer ONE essay question on An Inspector Calls. (30 marks).

Section B: Anthology Poetry (e.g., Worlds and Lives) You answer ONE comparative question on two poems from the anthology. (30 marks).

Section C: Unseen Poetry. You answer TWO questions: Analysis and Comparison. (32 marks).

# French Pathway B, C, and D only

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, alongside grammar and translation. They develop their spoken and written French in a wide range of topics, using tools such as Sentence Builders to support production of extended sentences. 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?

- Theme 1: People and Lifestyle.
- Theme 2: Popular Culture.
- Theme 3: Communication and the world around us.

## How is it assessed?

**Paper 1:** Listening (25% of GCSE) - Understanding and responding to spoken extracts comprising the defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier, and dictation of short, spoken extracts.

- Section A: Listening comprehension questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally.
- Section B: Dictation where pupils transcribe short sentences.

**Paper 2:** Speaking (25% of GCSE) - Speaking using clear and comprehensible language, reading aloud and talking about visual stimuli:

- Role-play.
- Reading aloud and short unprepared conversation.
- Discussion of a photo card and longer unprepared conversation.

**Paper 3:** Reading (25% of GCSE) - Understanding and responding to written texts and translating from French into English.

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

**Paper 4:** Writing (25% of GCSE) - Writing in French in a lexically and grammatically accurate way in response to simple and familiar stimuli and translating from English into French.

The question styles are different at foundation and higher tier:

Foundation Tier:

- Question 1: five short sentences in response to a photo.
- Question 2: paragraph of approximately 50 words.
- Question 3: five short grammar tasks.
- Question 4: translation of sentences from English into French.
- Question 5: paragraph of approximately 90 words (choice of 2 questions).

Higher Tier:

- Question 1: translation of sentences from English into French.
- Question 2: paragraph of approximately 90 words (choice of 2 questions).
- Question 3: open-ended writing task of approximately 150 words (choice from two questions).

# 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 pupils 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?

- Number.
- Algebra.
- Ratio, proportion and rates of change.
- Geometry and measures.
- Probability.
- 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.

Pupils are able to take assessments in either the foundation tier (grades 1 to 5) or higher tier (grades 3 to 9).



# Optional Subject Choices

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.



# Art

Course Title: GCSE Art & Design: Fine Art

Exam Board: OCR

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

**\*Pupils can either pick Art or Photography - it isn't possible to do both.**

**Please talk to your art teacher if you are not sure which one to select.**

## 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 pupils 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 2025-2030 include creative thinking, curiosity, lifelong learning, leadership, and analytical thinking - all in their top 10. A course such as Art allows pupils 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 pupil 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?

Pupils 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 pupils 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. Pupils 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. Pupils 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 & Design: Photography

Exam Board: OCR

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

\* Pupils can either pick Art or Photography - it isn't possible to do both.

Please talk to your art teacher if you are not sure which one to select.

## 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.

All photography projects will be written up and presented on a computer alongside all of the creative 'post production' work (such as Photoshop, Premiere Pro and any other photo editing). It is therefore important to like working with computers, as most of your time will be spent in this way.

## What will be studied?

Pupils 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, pupils 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.

# Business Studies

Course Title: GCSE Business.

Exam Board: AQA.

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## What is the course like?

GCSE Business provides an exciting opportunity for students who are interested in the world around them and may want a career in business. Students will learn how entrepreneurs turn simple ideas into profitable businesses, and how businesses operate and make important decisions on a local, national and global scale. The course explores what it takes to be successful in business, and it encourages students to be enterprising, and to think creatively and commercially in order to solve problems.

We believe that our programme of study will develop confident and enthusiastic Business students who can reflect on real life situations and make recommendations that would enhance the performance of any business. Students will develop key skills such as the ability to recall, select and apply knowledge and understanding of business; as well as to analyse and evaluate evidence providing reasoned judgements and conclusions. Success in this course would enable students to progress to all types of further education including A levels, and can lead into a wide range of careers including marketing, IT, computing, retail, finance, economics, law, management, insurance, administration, and banking.

## What will be studied?

The GCSE Business course is divided into six main parts as set out below:

1. Business in the real world.
2. Influences on business.
3. Business operations.
4. Human Resources.
5. Marketing.
6. Finance.

## How is it assessed?

The GCSE Business course is assessed through two written examinations:

- **Paper 1:** Influences of operations and HRM on business activity. This examination is worth a maximum of 90 marks and comprises 50% of your GCSE result. It is 1 hour 45 minutes long.
- **Paper 2:** Influences of marketing and finance on business activity. This examination is worth a maximum of 90 marks and comprises 50% of your GCSE result. It is 1 hour 45 minutes long.

Both examinations have three sections:

- **Section A:** multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions worth 20 marks.
- **Section B:** a short case study with questions worth approximately 34 marks.
- **Section C:** a short case study with questions worth approximately 36 marks.

# Computer Science

Course Title: GCSE Computer Science

Exam Board: OCR

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

\* Pupils can either pick GCSE Computer Science or Vocational IT, and are then required to work with the Computer Science department to decide which of the two subjects they are best suited to.

## 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.

## How is it assessed?

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

- [Paper 1](#): Computer Systems (50%).
- [Paper 2](#): Computational thinking, algorithms and programming (50%).

Both exam papers are 1 hour and 30 minutes long and are out of 80 marks.

# Vocational IT

Course Title: Cambridge Nationals IT

Exam Board: OCR

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## Vocational Qualification

\* Pupils can either pick GCSE Computer Science or Vocational IT, and are then required to work with the Computer Science department to decide which of the two subjects they are best suited to.

### What is the course like?

In Key Stage 3 you will have spent a long time learning how computers work and how you can create programs for them. However, you will have also had lots of opportunities to interact with technology to help get your work done. You have created PowerPoints to act like websites, you have interacted on teams, sent emails, worked on different websites, created word documents and lots more. Using technology is something that will be part of every aspect of your lives when you are older and developing skills to be able to use technology confidently is important.

In vocational IT you will become confident users of technology. You will experience a range of applications and understand how they are used in the wider economy. You will be examined through a combination of NEA (non-examined assessment) and a written assessment. The exam is worth 40% and will be taught interactively using one of the computer labs. You will learn how to use modern applications confidently as you learn the theory for the exam.

The other two units are both NEA and will be taught through smaller projects to give pupils the confidence to pass the real NEA. Each stage of the NEA will be taught, practiced, and assessed before the real NEA is completed. You can read below about what you will be doing for both.

### What will be studied?

Unit 1. Exam:

- Design tools.
- Human computer interface (HCI) in everyday life.
- Data and testing.
- Cyber-security and legislation.
- Digital communications.
- Internet of Everything (IoE).

Unit 2. Spreadsheet NEA:

- Planning and designing a spreadsheet solution.
- Creating the spreadsheet solution.
- Testing the spreadsheet solution.

Unit 3. Using Augmented Reality (AR):

- Augmented Reality.
- Designing an augmented reality model prototype.
- Creating an Augmented reality model prototype.
- Testing and reviewing.

### How is it assessed?

There is one exam and two NEA:

- IT in the digital world (EXAM) – 40%
- Spreadsheet (NEA) – 30% \*
- Augmented reality (NEA) – 30% \*

The NEA will be done in class under controlled conditions.

The exam is 1 hour and 15 minutes.

# Design and Technology

Course Title: GCSE Design & 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, with papers 1 and 3 taking 1 hour and 30 minutes and paper 2 taking 1 hour and 45 minutes. The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, extended writing questions and calculations.

# German

Course Title: GCSE German

Exam Board: AQA

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

\* Pupils are able to choose GCSE German if they have studied it in Year 8 and Year 9

## What is the course like?

The GCSE German 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, alongside grammar and translation. They develop their spoken and written German in a wide range of topics, using tools such as Sentence Builders to support production of extended sentences. 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 German-speaking cultures, learning about the diversity their traditions.

## What will be studied?

Pupils study all of the following themes:

- Theme 1: People and Lifestyle.
- Theme 2: Popular Culture.
- Theme 3: Communication and the world around us.

## How is it assessed?

**Paper 1:** Listening (25% of GCSE) - Understanding and responding to spoken extracts comprising the defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier, and dictation of short, spoken extracts.

- Section A: Listening comprehension questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally.
- Section B: Dictation where students transcribe short sentences.

**Paper 2:** Speaking (25% of GCSE) - Speaking using clear and comprehensible language, reading aloud and talking about visual stimuli.

- Role-play.
- Reading aloud and short unprepared conversation.
- Discussion of a photo card and longer unprepared conversation.

**Paper 3:** Reading (25% of GCSE) - Understanding and responding to written texts and translating from German into English.

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

**Paper 4:** Writing (25% of GCSE) - Writing in German in a lexically and grammatically accurate way in response to simple and familiar stimuli and translating from English into German.

The question styles are different at foundation and higher tier:

Foundation Tier:

- Question 1: five short sentences in response to a photo.
- Question 2: paragraph of approximately 50 words.
- Question 3: five short grammar tasks.
- Question 4: translation of sentences from English into German.
- Question 5: paragraph of approximately 90 words (choice of 2 questions).

Higher Tier:

- Question 1: translation of sentences from English into German.
- Question 2: paragraph of approximately 90 words (choice of 2 questions).
- Question 3: open-ended writing task of approximately 150 words (choice from two questions).

# History

Course Title: GCSE History B (Schools History Project)

Exam Board: OCR

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## What is the course like?

Are you ready to uncover the secrets of the past and see how history shapes our world today? Our GCSE History course takes you on a journey through time and different places. You'll dive into the fight for better public health from medieval Britain to the present, explore the intrigue and daring adventures of Elizabethan England and follow the dramatic story of America's expansion westwards seeing how this impacts of African Americans, White Americans, and Native Americans. Experience the chilling reality of life under Nazi rule and walk through the history of Kenilworth Castle with a hands-on site study. Along the way, you'll become a detective, analysing real historical sources and interpretations to unlock the truth behind the events. If you love solving mysteries and understanding the world, this is the subject for you!

## 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 Kenilworth Castle's long history?
- Including looking at its uses as a medieval defensive site, a medieval palace, a Tudor mansion, a ruin, a farm and now a tourist attraction.

**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.

# Hospitality & Catering

Vocational Qualification

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. Pupils 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.

# Music

Course Title: GCSE Music

Exam Board: Eduqas

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## What is the course like?

Performing, composing and listening are the building blocks of the GCSE Music course; all skills that pupils have been developing from Years 7-9. Pupils will study a huge range of different styles of music from around the world and throughout the last 500 years, broadening their understanding of musical traditions. They will perform solo and in groups, building their instrumental or vocal skills, or alternatively will enhance their Music Technology skills for the sequenced performance option. They will also develop their composing skills with our Music Technology software, leading to pupils writing two complete original pieces of music. 60% of the overall grade is built around coursework (non-exam assessments), where pupils will receive regular guidance and support, with only one written exam paper at the end of their studies. Music GCSE is a creative option, where pupils develop a wide variety of transferrable skills that appeal to colleges, Universities and employers alike.

## 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. Pupils do not have to be instrumentalists; Music Technology skills learnt in Years 7-9 can be developed to recreate existing music on the sequenced performance route.

**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 and instrumentation in composition.

**3. Listening:** covering a wide range of styles including Classical Music, Blues, Musical Theatre, Film Music and Popular Music. Pupils will develop listening skills to identify and analyse features within the music, including two 'set works' that are studied in greater detail.

## How is it assessed?

The course is assessed through both coursework (non-exam assessments) and a written exam:

**Non-Exam Assessment - Component 1:** Performing (30% of the grade).

There are two possible performance routes pupils can follow; traditional performance using an instrument or voice; and sequenced performances using Music Technology.

**Instrumental and Vocal Performances:** Pupils will perform as both a soloist and within an ensemble group, and will be preparing their pieces throughout the course. For this pathway, it is beneficial, but not essential, for pupils to already play an instrument to a Grade 2 or 3 standard, or already be taking instrumental or vocal lessons.

**Sequenced Performances:** Pupils will use Music Technology such as Cubase to accurately record parts of an existing piece into the software program, building on skills developed throughout Years 7-9. For the final part of the assessment, pupils will perform one line of the music live alongside their pre-recorded parts.

**Non-Exam Assessment - Component 2:** Composing (30% of the grade).

Pupils will compose two pieces of music, one to a set brief (e.g 'compose a piece of music for a sci-fi film') and one free composition (pupils choose exactly what they do). We will build on these skills and techniques throughout the course.

**Exam Assessment - Component 3:** Listening and Appraising (40% of the grade).

Pupils will take a 1 hour 15 minutes listening and appraising exam. This is a written exam in which pupils will answer questions on the set works they have studied, as well as listening to and identifying the features of unfamiliar pieces of music from a range of styles.

# Physical Education

Course Title: GCSE Physical Education

Exam Board: OCR

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

\* Pupils can either pick GCSE PE or Sports Studies, and are then required to work with the PE department to decide which of the two subjects they are best suited to.

## 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):

- Analysis and evaluation of practical performance (AEP) coursework project.
- 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 & well-being (30%, 1 hour).

# Sports Studies

Course Title: Level 2 Cambridge National: Sports Studies.

Exam Board: OCR.

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## Vocational Qualification

\* Pupils can either pick GCSE PE or Sports Studies, and are then required to work with the PE department to decide which of the two subjects they are best suited to.

### 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 3 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. Marks: 70 | 1 hour 15 min paper.

#### Unit 2: Performance and Leadership in Sport

Know the qualities, responsibilities and styles of sports leaders; planning, delivering, and evaluating a sports sessions for younger children with and without special educational needs and disabilities. You will also use skills, techniques and tactics in both an individual and a team based sport; applying training methods to support performance improvements. Marks: 80 | Practical Performance and Leadership, Coursework.

#### Unit 3: 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. Marks: 40 | Coursework.

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.

# Religious Studies

Course Title: GCSE Religious Studies

Exam Board: WJEC Eduqas

Course Specification: [Click here.](#)

## What is the course like?

This GCSE course provides pupils with the opportunity to explore both religious and non-religious worldviews. This includes the study of Christianity, Islam, Atheism, and Humanism to develop a deep and balanced understanding of belief, values, and meaning in the modern world. Pupils will engage critically with key questions about truth, morality, identity, and purpose, drawing on religious texts, philosophical reasoning, and ethical debate. The course also promotes character development, encouraging pupils to think independently, articulate informed opinions, and understand the beliefs and practices of others with empathy and respect. By the end of the course, pupils will have gained not only an academic qualification but also a broader awareness of how ideas, faith, and reason influence individuals, communities, and global society.

## What will be studied?

This course is divided into three sections:

Component	Focus	Topics Covered	Skills and Personal Development
1. Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World	Exploration of moral and philosophical responses to contemporary ethical issues through religious and non-religious perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships and Families</li> <li>Life and Death</li> <li>Good and Evil</li> <li>Human Rights Students evaluate Christian, Islamic, and humanist responses, developing critical awareness of diverse viewpoints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethical reasoning and moral literacy</li> <li>Debate and extended writing</li> <li>Respectful discussion of complex issues</li> <li>Application of theory to real-world dilemmas</li> </ul>
2. Christianity: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices	Study of key Christian beliefs, teachings, and how these are lived out in personal and collective practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nature of God and the Trinity</li> <li>Creation; the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus</li> <li>Worship, prayer, pilgrimage, and festivals</li> <li>Christianity in Britain and across the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretation of religious texts</li> <li>Understanding diversity within Christianity</li> <li>Linking belief to practice and moral choices</li> <li>Strengthening analytical and comparative skills</li> </ul>
3. Islam: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices	Examination of foundational Islamic beliefs and practices, and how these influence Muslim life and identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nature of Allah; angels and the afterlife</li> <li>Prophethood and the Qur'an</li> <li>The Five Pillars and Ten Obligatory Acts</li> <li>Festivals, jihad, and community in Islam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy and cultural understanding</li> <li>Evaluation of religious authority and community life</li> <li>Analytical comparison between belief systems</li> <li>Development of informed, balanced viewpoints</li> </ul>

### How is it assessed?

Assessment is by three written examinations:

Papers	Content	Duration	Weighting
Paper 1	Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World	2 hours	50%
Paper 2	Study of Christianity	1 hour	25%
Paper 3	Study of Islam	1 hour	25%

All examinations assess pupils' ability to explain and evaluate religious and moral arguments, apply knowledge to ethical scenarios, and communicate clearly using correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

### Why Study GCSE Religious Studies?

Religious Studies offers a rigorous academic foundation that supports future study in subjects such as philosophy, sociology, law, and politics. It develops critical thinking, literacy, and reasoning skills that are valued across all disciplines.

Most importantly, it helps pupils to understand themselves, others, and the complex moral questions that shape the world. This will prepare pupils to engage thoughtfully, ethically, and respectfully within an increasingly pluralistic, socio-political world.

University of Birmingham School  
12 Weoley Park Road  
Selly Oak  
Birmingham  
B29 6QU

t: 0121 796 5000  
e: [reception@uobschool.org.uk](mailto:reception@uobschool.org.uk)  
w: [uobschool.org.uk](http://uobschool.org.uk)

Keep in touch

