

## Sixth form Q&A session summary

Please find below some answers to commonly asked questions about our sixth form:

### Entry requirements and subjects

- If an individual does well enough in the GCSEs that they wish to take on to A level but doesn't do so well in Maths and English, are there opportunities to retake any of these subjects?
  - We will tailor a programme of support to a student's individual needs if they haven't achieved a pass in English language or maths. We will fit support around their A level timetables. For both these subjects, there is an opportunity to resit in November after they have taken their GCSE exams and again in the summer series of the following year.
- If a subject such as Psychology requires a 5 in Maths but the student hasn't a 5 at GCSE, can they start the psychology course on the basis they will be doing a maths retake?
- Is there flexibility around the entry requirements of 6, 5 for science subjects?
  - No. We have found that this is the minimum required for students to be able to cope with the significant demands of the A level courses. We already have relatively low entry requirements compared with similar centres.
- What is the relationship between the maths and further maths A-level courses?
  - Students doing maths and further maths will be taught in the same group and will have 18 periods of maths per fortnight on their timetables. It is not possible to do an A Level in further maths without doing an A Level in maths. We teach the further maths course parallel to the A Level maths course but begin Year 12 with an initial focus on the maths A Level to provide students with the knowledge and skills that they need to access the further maths course
- Is there such a thing as an A-level course being oversubscribed?
  - At the point of application, we use the choices students make to optimise the blocks. We will always aim to accommodate as many choices as we can at this point as far as the timetable and staffing allows. The most likely point time for students to find courses being oversubscribed is where they are changing their choices later on in the process. At this point, we put students on a waiting list and if space becomes available, we would allow the students to join the course.
- If students take 4 A levels do they have to drop one of them? Roughly speaking, what proportion of pupils manage to do four A-levels?
  - For most students, dropping to three A levels is the right thing to do in order to maximise the grades they can achieve in those subjects. Students do not have to drop an A level subject. Every year, we have a number of students who continue with four subjects until the end. The most likely combination of subjects for students taking four A levels is maths, further maths, physics and chemistry, although one or two students might be taking more disparate subjects. No more than 10% of students take 4 A levels. A number of students will have completed an EPQ, though, which is worth the same UCAS points as an AS level.
- Are there any subject combinations that aren't possible?

- We will not allow students to do more than two practical subjects. No future plans would require students to have done more. The workload for coursework is such that more than two of this type of subject would be unmanageable. We encourage students to think carefully about taking both business studies and economics as there is considerable overlap with some content and it might not represent a 'broad and balanced curriculum'. That said, a number of students will opt for both in the first instance with a view to taking just one of those subjects forward to examination. We strongly encourage students who are opting for physics to also do maths and if this was not the case we would need to discuss the subject choices.

#### **Application process:**

- What happens in the interview?
  - No formal preparation is required. Interviews are an opportunity for us to talk through a student's plans and subject combinations. We will check that they are aware of the work required for A levels and the expectations of the sixth form. We will ask students about their wider interests and give students an opportunity to ask any questions they might have about the sixth form.

#### **Managing work:**

- What does the typical fortnight look like?
  - In year 12, students will 9 periods a fortnight per subject – usually split between 2 teachers. They will also have a number of non-contact periods that are intended for independent study. A level courses are such that considerable independent work is necessary to complete them successfully. Students will also have 'enrichment' and 'life skills' on their timetables.
- How do you know what to do in free periods?
  - In the first instance, teachers will set homework that can be done in free periods. Students may also be given wider-reading lists to guide their further study of the subjects. Students will be expected to use free periods to consolidate the work taught in their lessons as well to check understanding, learn concepts and content and practise applying their knowledge.
- Where can you work and can you stay after school?
  - The students have access to the sixth form study library from 7.30 in the morning until 5.30 in the evening (5pm on Fridays). This is a space for silent working and is often supervised by staff. Students can also access the main school library when it is not being used by other classes, the canteen and free rooms around school. Spaces other than the study library are good for group working, but provide less opportunity for focussed concentration.
- What do you do if you are struggling?
  - Talk to a teacher! A levels are very hard and everyone needs help at some point. We never see it as a sign of weakness or failure; on the contrary, the strongest students seek out help from the beginning and maintain a good dialogue with their teachers throughout.

#### **Beyond the classroom:**

- What opportunities are there outside of lessons? What is enrichment?
  - Enrichment is an opportunity to build a range of experiences and activities into your school life to strengthen applications. Opportunities include science outreach to primary schools, studying for an Extended Project Qualification, charity team, CANSAT, first aid, sign language, department help, placements in care homes and primary schools, volunteering in charity shops and work experience placements. Students can also use enrichment opportunities to count towards their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Can you do sport in the sixth form?
  - Enrichment offers an opportunity to do games every week. Sixth formers have access to a range of lunch time and after school clubs and also play on our U18 teams in a range of sports including rugby, football, hockey and netball.
- Do you have a work experience week?
  - Activities week for year 12 provides an opportunity to do work experience as well as students being able to do a regular placement as part of their enrichment programme.
- What is an EPQ?
  - EPQ stands for Extended Project Qualification. Students research and write a report on a topic of their choice. The students are assessed for both the quality of their project outcome and the process of conducting their research. A number of universities will make adjusted offers where students get a high EPQ grade.
- Do you recommend paid employment alongside A levels?
  - Many students have a job that they do alongside their studies. Students need to be aware that too much paid employment will have a negative impact on their A level attainment so we recommend no more than one night in the school week and no more than one day at the weekend.
- Are there social activities in the sixth form?
  - The sixth form leadership team aim to put on regular recreational events after school. Recently, we have enjoyed film nights and a pizza and quiz evening. In the summer, we have enjoyed sports afternoon and bbqs. At the end of year 13, most students attend prom.
- What are the “additional life skills” that students get every fortnight?
  - Some of these sessions are the KS5 version of what is called PSHE in the lower school. We also do a range of sessions focussed on future plans – be they university, employment or apprenticeships, and sessions on study skills at critical times such as during the run up to exams.
- Can students have driving lessons during school time if they coincide with private study?
  - Students in year 12 are not allowed to be off site during the school day except at lunch time and if they are attending an agreed placement. In year 13, students have the privilege of ‘home study’ and they can also designate a regular slot for driving lessons.