



ST ALBANS
SCHOOL

GCSE Choices

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(I)GCSEs

In the First, Second and Third Forms you have received a general education and have all followed broadly similar courses, though you have been able to make some choices within the creative subjects and languages in the Third Form.

From the Fourth Form onwards you are able to specialise, enabling you to study individual subjects in greater depth. These studies will lead to qualifications called General Certificates of Secondary Education or GCSEs, or to International GCSEs (IGCSEs). Though designed originally specifically for international students, IGCSEs are now commonly taught in this country, particularly in independent schools. They are accepted as at least equal to GCSEs by all universities and employers, although they tend not to be recognised in Department for Education league tables.

Later, in the Sixth Form, you will specialise further and study subjects at Advanced Level. University entrance is determined mainly by your results at Advanced Level but many universities look carefully at the GCSE record of potential students before deciding whether to make an offer of a place.

The standard curriculum for St Albans School pupils in the Fourth and Fifth Forms consists of

6 COMPULSORY (I)GCSEs

4 OPTIONAL (I)GCSEs

This booklet is designed to help you make a choice of subjects. It indicates which courses are likely to be available and gives an outline of the content and nature of each subject. **Please note that we do not guarantee that the specifications and options given here will be those taken from September onwards, but all changes will be fully explained to you.**

Parents and pupils should appreciate that the final decisions regarding admission to particular courses offered each year are at the discretion of the Headmaster.

There is an opportunity for additional study in the form of a Higher Project: information about this further opportunity is given at the end of this booklet.

Please note that all GCSE and IGCSE examinations are now linear; that is, taking modules early in the course is no longer allowed. All examinations must be taken together at the end of the course.

Almost all GCSEs and IGCSEs will, by summer 2020, be assessed according to the 9-1 number scale, with 9 being the top grade. The boundary between grades 6 and 7 is set at the same level as the old boundary between B and A, and the boundary between 3 and 4 at the same level as the old boundary between D and C. However, the old B and C grades will be replaced by grades 4, 5 and 6 and the old A* and A grades by grades 7, 8 and 9. Grade 8 will be a little easier to achieve than the old A*, and grade 9 a good deal harder.

MAKING YOUR CHOICE

The (I)GCSEs which pupils choose will open the gate to a Sixth Form career, and ultimately to higher education. To have a realistic chance of success at A Level, a pupil needs to have demonstrated some aptitude for academic study at (I)GCSE.

The School's minimum entry requirements for entry to the Sixth Form are as follows:

- English Language and Mathematics GCSE must be passed at grade 6 or better.
- In the subject to be studied at A Level, or in a closely related subject where the equivalent GCSE is not available, a grade 7 or better must be achieved.
- Students must have achieved an average GCSE score of 6.6.

For those A Level courses where the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, preference is given to pupils with the best performance at (I)GCSE.

It is therefore very important that the correct decisions are made at this stage.

To facilitate this choice, the school provides every opportunity for advice and guidance.

The programme for consultation is as follows:

Issue of booklet(s)

Choices evening

Completion of forms

Achievement

It is important when choosing (I)GCSEs to consider your ***achievement*** in a given subject. Good grades at (I)GCSE can influence universities and may make the difference between getting an interview or offer and not getting one. With so many good candidates chasing a limited number of places, the universities have to distinguish between apparently equally able applicants and so they look back at (I)GCSE results. You should therefore consider both your ***proven*** achievement (exam marks, report grades) in a subject as well as your ***potential*** achievement, but do not expect your teachers to be able to predict how you will do at (I)GCSE. Much can change over the next two years! Amongst other things your final performance will depend upon:

Aptitude and Motivation

It is one thing to get good grades or marks in a subject, but quite another to do this easily; how long do you spend on homeworks? Do the relevant skills and techniques come easily to you, or do you have to work long hours to do well? Do you have the relevant skills for a practically-based subject? If you find subjects easy, then you probably have an ***aptitude*** for them.

Equally important, however, is ***interest***. Do you find the subject interesting for its own sake? Do you read about the subject or visit websites that carry associated material? Do you watch television programmes that are related to the subject? Enthusiasm can perhaps count for as much as ability, particularly where extended coursework tasks are a part of the subject assessment. Give some thought

to the teacher who is taking you; if you get on well with them (or the opposite!), does this affect how you view a subject? How would you feel if another teacher were to teach the (I)GCSE course?

Careers

It is quite usual for Third Form pupils to have no clear idea of a future career, but we do anticipate that almost all students who enter the Sixth Form at St Albans School will go on to university.

Where a pupil is already anticipating a given career, it should be borne in mind that in the majority of cases this is likely to change; in the light of this it is important that a perceived career path should not be allowed to narrow unduly the range of subjects selected, and that up-to-date careers advice is sought where necessary. Equally, however, an excessive concern for breadth can have the result of closing doors: for example, to study Modern Languages at university you will almost certainly need to have studied two modern languages at (I)GCSE. Mr Brien (Sixth Form Deputy Head with responsibility for Careers) and the Heads of Sixth Form are available for consultation relating to issues concerning university entrance and careers.

THE COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

The compulsory subjects account for six (I)GCSEs.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ENGLISH LITERATURE

MATHEMATICS

PHYSICS

CHEMISTRY

BIOLOGY

ENGLISH

Examining Board: **AQA 8700 GCSE English Language**
 CIE 0477 IGCSE English Literature

- English in the Fourth and Fifth Forms constitutes a combined course, taught over two years, certificating pupils for two qualifications: English and English Literature.
- For English Language, pupils follow a course without external coursework and with terminal assessments that examine traditional skills and aptitudes: we believe that this suits our students better than a qualification involving about 20 hours of teaching time devoted to Controlled Assessment or an exam composed of artificial and arbitrary tasks.
- For English Literature there is an interesting range of texts engaging with both national and international traditions, and a comparative unseen paper instead of coursework.
- We will set pupils, informed by results in the internal exams.
- The department follows an agreed programme of study, but teachers of each set choose texts and assessment tasks appropriate to the set's level of ability and in response to their own literary enthusiasms.

Course content

The course is 'literature-led', using a range of literature texts (poetry, prose and drama) to stimulate development and attainment of skills in Reading, Writing and Speaking & Listening (the National Curriculum Attainment Objectives for this subject). For English Language we will also explore non-fiction and media texts, including travel writing, autobiography and journalism. Students will also learn to evaluate these, building on their work in the Third Form, and will write in a range of different styles

There are two exams in English Language (roughly, fiction and non-fiction), while English Literature is assessed via three papers. Exams will be taken in the Fifth Form. Students will be prepared for the exams through internal examination at the end of the Fourth Form and during the Fifth Form.

English Language Exams

There are two papers.

Paper One: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing 1 hour 45 minutes (50%)

Section A: Reading

This consists of a series of questions in response to a passage of literary fiction. The questions will deal with short form factual retrieval, assessment of the writer's techniques, looking at the structure of the passage and a (brief) essay response to a statement about the passage.

Section B: Writing

This comprises one extended writing question, in either narrative or descriptive form. 40% of the marks are awarded for technical accuracy.

Both sections of the paper are worth 40 marks.

Section A: Reading.

This consists of a series of questions in response to two linked passages of non-fiction. There will be short form factual true or false questions, questions requiring summarising skills and looking at the language of one passage, and a (brief) comparative essay.

Section B: Writing.

In section B, there will be a single writing task related to the theme of section A. It will specify audience, purpose and form, and will use a range of opinions, statements and writing scenarios to provoke a response. 40% of the marks are awarded for technical accuracy.

Both sections of the paper are worth 40 marks.

Speaking and Listening Assessment

(Separately Assessed)

Assessed internally and moderated externally, this consists of a 10-minute individual presentation followed by questions. This is a compulsory part of the course, but does not contribute to the final grade.

English Literature Exams

There are three papers.

Component 1 Poetry and Prose

1 hr 30 minutes (35%)

There will be a choice of two different questions on each set text, a Poetry Text and a Prose Text. (Candidates write two essays/passage analyses, one on each text studied. It is not permitted to bring texts into the examination room.)

Component 2 Drama

1 hr 30 minutes (35%)

Students will study a Shakespeare play and one other drama. Candidates write two essays/passage analyses, one on each text studied. It is not permitted to bring texts into the examination room.

Component 3 Unseen

1 hr 30 minutes (30%)

Students choose one question, and will write a critical commentary and comparison of two unseen passages of either prose or poetry. The assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar is included in this component.

MATHEMATICS

Examining Board: Edexcel IGCSE

At the beginning of the Third Form, pupils start the two-and-a-half year IGCSE course.

The subject content consists of five main areas:

- *Number*
- *Algebra*
- *Graphs*
- *Shape and Space (including geometry and trigonometry)*
- *Data handling (probability and statistics)*

The textbooks used are specifically designed for the course. The subject content is divided into a number of units, each lasting approximately half a term. Each unit contains material from the five areas listed above, revising and building on the previous units.

To prepare for the examinations, considerable emphasis is placed on revision using past papers, to consolidate understanding and improve examination technique.

There are two examination papers, each of two hours' duration, which are both taken at the start of the Spring Term of the Fifth Form.

There is no coursework.

Setting

Mathematics is taught in sets throughout the school, allowing teaching at a pace and to a level of sophistication appropriate to each pupil. Setting is flexible at all stages. All students cover the same syllabus and are prepared for the same examination, so that the final grade achievable is not restricted by being in a particular set.

Fifth Form Mathematics

Having completed the IGCSE course students will study Additional Mathematics for the rest of the Fifth Form. This course introduces many of the concepts and material in AS Mathematics. This enables pupils to discover whether they have the interest and aptitude to continue with the subject in the Sixth Form.

The main areas of study are Algebra, Trigonometry and an introduction to Calculus. Some applications of mathematics, for example in Statistics and Mechanics, are also introduced.

Entry to the Sixth Form for A Level Mathematics is dependent on a good performance in an examination on the Fifth Form course.

SCIENCE

Examining Board: Edexcel IGCSE

Pupils will study and sit three separate IGCSEs in Physics, Chemistry and Biology. They have already started these IGCSE courses in the Third Form and will continue with them for the next two years. We hope that students not only learn scientific principles and techniques, but also develop an appreciation for the complexity and beauty of nature and the capabilities and limitations of science.

PHYSICS

The IGCSE Physics specification is a broad-based course covering all major topics in physics. Experimental and investigative skills are key to the practice of physics and there is a significant emphasis on pupils developing these through carrying out practical work and critically analysing their results. In the course of their three years, students will study Forces and Motion, Electricity, Waves, Energy Transfer and Resources, Solids, Liquids and Gases, Magnetism and Electromagnetism and Radioactivity and Nuclear Physics. The teaching is carefully structured so that pupils are introduced to topics only when they have developed the skills, knowledge and maturity necessary to fully appreciate them.

CHEMISTRY

The IGCSE Chemistry course provides the students with a good grounding in the unifying patterns and themes that run through chemistry. Students develop their understanding of these concepts through a range of experimental investigations. They are required to plan and analyse their work to expand their insight into the concepts covered. This practical work also cultivates their investigative skills and their appreciation of safe laboratory techniques. The Chemistry specification ensures that the students build up their knowledge from the fundamental particles in atoms, through to complex molecules and how these molecules interact with each other. By the end of the course, students will have an understanding of the widespread importance of chemistry and the way materials are used in the world. They will appreciate how the work of the chemist has social, industrial, technological, environmental and economic consequences for the community.

BIOLOGY

Students will further their understanding in a broad range of topics. They begin by studying the variety exhibited between living organisms, and then go on to investigate the structure and function of organisms, from the microscopic cellular level up to and including entire organ systems. Once students have grasped the fundamental principles that underpin many of the remaining topics, such as diffusion and the biochemistry of key molecules, they will go on to look at how characteristics are inherited and how our lives revolve around the use of biological resources. Biology is a rapidly expanding subject. Students are encouraged to bring in ideas from news articles, which are often related, for example, to medicine or to climate change. There are many opportunities during the course to take part in practical activities and to consider the importance of biology to our lives.

Students will complete a wide variety of practical activities throughout the three years, and develop their experimental and analytical techniques. These skills will then be assessed within the two written papers in each science.

THE OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

Pupils must choose four of the following subjects, of which one must be a Modern Language:

ART

COMPUTER SCIENCE

DESIGN and TECHNOLOGY/ELECTRONICS

DRAMA

ECONOMICS

FRENCH

GEOGRAPHY

GERMAN

GREEK (CLASSICAL)

HISTORY

LATIN

MUSIC

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

SPANISH

The details for French, German and Spanish are listed under *MODERN LANGUAGES*.
The details for Latin and Greek are listed under *CLASSICAL SUBJECTS*.

Pupils may also choose to undertake a self-guided *Higher Project Qualification*, details of which may be found at the end of this booklet.

ART

Examining Board: OCR

Aims of the course

- To develop visual perception and understanding including the creative, imaginative and practical skills for working in art, craft and design.
- To develop visual literacy and an appreciation of the richness of our cultural heritage through practical and critical responses to achievement in art, craft and design.
- To develop the individual's special aptitudes and interests and foster and encourage confidence, enthusiasm and a sense of achievement.

Course Content and Assessment

Component I Coursework 60% of total mark

Candidates produce a portfolio (of preparation work and final piece(s)) from personal or given starting points. They will be given up to 15 weeks in which to complete their portfolio.

Component II Examination 40% of total mark

The examination time is 10 hours (usually spread over two consecutive days). Candidates are given up to 10 weeks to prepare; they choose one theme to interpret from 10 given starting points. They are assessed on their ability to research and develop an idea, their use of materials and ability to make connections with the work of other artists.

The two components are internally assessed, standardised across teaching groups and then externally moderated. Each component is assessed on the following four objectives:

AO1: Candidates record responses from direct experience, observation and imagination and develop ideas for their work, investigating visual and other sources of information.

AO2: Candidates explore and use a range of processes, materials and techniques by selecting visual elements in one or more specialist disciplines working in two and/or three dimensions. Candidates review, modify and refine work as it progresses through process to outcome, realising their intentions.

AO3: Candidates investigate and research to identify the distinctive characteristics of art, craft and design and relate them to the context in which the work was created. They make connections with their own work and they make informed comment and critical judgements about art, craft and design, using a specialist vocabulary.

AO4: Candidates present personal responses and realise intentions. They make informal connections with the work of others.

Materials

Essential materials are provided but additional equipment such as sketchbooks, brushes, pencils and portfolios are recommended and can often be bought through the Department.

Excursions

A number of gallery visits are made during the course. These are usually to the Tate and National Galleries as well as thematic visits, for example, to the Imperial War Museum and the British Museum. Pupils also have the opportunity to participate in a study visit to a European capital. Visits in the past have included Amsterdam, Barcelona and Madrid. These provide an excellent opportunity to study works of art first-hand as well as providing inspiration for pupils' own artwork.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Examining Board: CIE IGCSE

Computer Science provides an opportunity to study how computers and computer systems work, how they are designed and programmed and how to apply computational thinking.

Aims of the course

The aims are to develop:

- computational thinking, that is thinking about what can be computed and how, and includes consideration of the data required
- understanding of the main principles of solving problems by using computers
- understanding that every computer system is made up of sub-systems, which in turn consist of further sub-systems
- understanding of the component parts of computer systems and how they interrelate, including software, data, hardware, communications and people
- skills necessary to apply understanding to solve computer-based problems using a high-level programming language.

Course Content

Section 1 - Theory of Computer Science

- 1.1 Data representation
- 1.2 Communication and Internet technologies
- 1.3 Hardware and software
- 1.4 Security
- 1.5 Ethics

Section 2 - Practical Problem-solving and Programming

- 2.1 Algorithm design and problem-solving
- 2.2 Programming
- 2.3 Databases

Assessment

Two examinations at the end of the Fifth Form, each of 1 hour 45 minutes: Paper 1 is Theory (60%) and Paper 2 is Problem-Solving and Programming (40%). They both contain short-answer and structured questions. Both examinations are externally assessed; there is no controlled assessment.

CLASSICAL SUBJECTS

LATIN

Examining Board: OCR (J282)

The aim of Latin GCSE is primarily to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the use of language in general. As with their earlier study of Latin, the learning of Latin words will greatly enrich pupils' knowledge of English vocabulary, and the study of Latin grammar will enable them to develop a greater understanding of how English in particular, and languages in general, are structured. The study of Latin literature enables them to develop a more sensitive awareness of the language as they see how skilful authors use language effectively to convey subtle messages and to create certain effects on their audiences. Above all, they are learning about communication.

The syllabus involves translating unseen Latin prose into English, answering comprehension questions on unseen Latin prose and studying Latin prescribed texts, both prose and verse, in the original language. Candidates are assessed on their language competence and their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of prepared works of Latin literature.

Paper 1 Unprepared Comprehension and Translation 1 hour 30mins 50%

Paper 3 Prose Literature 1 hour 25%

Paper 4 Verse Literature 1 hour 25%

There is no coursework option.

GREEK

Examining Board: OCR (J292)

The aims and content of this syllabus are very similar to those for Latin.

Paper 1 Unprepared Comprehension and Translation 1 hour 30 mins 50%

Paper 3 Prose Literature 1 hour 25%

Paper 4 Verse Literature 1 hour 25%

There is no coursework option.

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY / ELECTRONICS

Examining Boards: Design & Technology – AQA
Electronics – WJEC

At this stage the students can opt to specialise in either Design & Technology or Electronics.

Design & Technology – AQA

Design and Technology is an exciting, dynamic area of the curriculum where students are encouraged to identify problems or needs and design, develop and manufacture realistic, high-quality prototypes. The subject encourages innovation, imagination and flair and reflects the ever-changing world in which we live and interact. It places growing emphasis on the environment and sustainability but also encourages the use of modern materials and manufacturing techniques through computer aided design and manufacture. Students explore ways in which aesthetic, technical, economic, environmental, ethical and social dimensions interact to shape decision-making and their designing and making. There is also a strong emphasis on the practical application of mathematical and scientific principles.

Students will need to have studied the subject in the Third Form and demonstrated an aptitude for the subject throughout KS3 modules of work as the range of skills required, along with the nature of assessment, are rather different from those in other areas of the curriculum. Staff will advise students and parents throughout the options process.

The GCSE allows students 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 technical principles in greater depth through an in-depth examination of a chosen range of specific materials.

Assessment

There are two elements to the final assessment:

Paper 1 – A written 2-hour examination, which accounts for 50% of the final grade and examines a breadth of technical knowledge and understanding, specialist technical knowledge based on specific chosen material areas and designing and making principles.

Paper 2 – Non-exam assessment (NEA or Coursework), which again counts for 50% of the final grade. In this element of the course the students will be presented with a contextual challenge by the examination board and will be expected to establish their own design brief. They must then complete a substantial design and make task, working through the iterative design process to produce a design portfolio and working prototype. The students are carefully guided through the coursework but to ensure maximum marks are achieved prior to the written paper, they must be prepared to make use of after school sessions. Students should also be aware that it is imperative to achieve high marks in the NEA if they are to go on to gain access to the top grades. If they do not meet a minimum threshold of a C grade (which is well below the school average), they will not be entered for the final examinations.

Electronics – WJEC

This specification is designed to meet the needs and aspirations of candidates entering a progressively more technological society, by giving them an insight into how modern-day electronic systems work and are designed. It allows them to take charge of their own learning by providing a range of teaching and investigative opportunities. The knowledge and skills acquired through the study of Electronics allow students to study the subject at A level and beyond if they wish, and also consider employment in scientific and technological professions. In studying Electronics, they will encounter techniques and disciplines that are useful in many other subject areas, and will also make significant and frequent use of their mathematical knowledge and skills. This specification has been designed with a systems approach in mind, which forms a framework around which all the component and circuit theory is delivered. Within this approach, candidates are expected to use their abilities in defining and solving electronic problems, and in selecting the best realisation from a range of investigated options. They are also able to understand how the component parts of a system interact to make the whole system meet its specification. Components are considered in terms of their functions within a sub-system, with complete circuits and systems being considered as a number of interacting sub-systems.

Assessment

The development of theoretical knowledge and practical skills throughout the course is assessed through the Extended System Design and Realisation Task, undertaken by each student on an individual basis. This substantial task, taking some 20 weeks of teaching and homework time, involves the specifying, designing, building and testing of a prototype circuit, and the production of a detailed technical project report. It carries a weighting of 20% of the overall GCSE award, is internally marked and externally moderated. Candidates are carefully guided through the task, with their work being periodically reviewed so that guidance and advice can be offered where appropriate.

At the end of the course in each of the two taught modules (Discovering Electronics, and Application of Electronics) there is an examination of 1 hour 30 minutes in length, weighted at 40% of the GCSE Award, and composed of a range of short answer questions and extended writing questions. There will be a mock examination towards the end of the Autumn Term in the Fifth Form, and the final examination will be preceded by a comprehensive series of revision sessions.

DRAMA

Examining Board: AQA (8261)

Drama is an exciting, creative, stimulating and challenging course and has been designed to help students meet those challenges. This course is ideal for those who have enjoyed Drama in the First, Second and Third Forms and would like to pursue their interest further by learning skills required for theatre performance and by working creatively on a variety of projects. The students should also gain confidence in social skills, problem solving, communication and working with others. Evening theatre trips and practical workshops are organised as part of the course. There is a high up-take for this enjoyable and demanding course.

The course has as much opportunity as possible for students to do what they like best – participate in performance. All students devise drama. All students explore texts practically and work on two text-based performances. Students can choose to develop as a:

- performer
- designer (lighting, sound, set, costume, puppets)
- performer and designer.

Whichever option they choose, students can be sure to gather many invaluable skills, both theatrical and transferable, to expand their horizons.

The subject content for GCSE Drama is divided into three components:

Component 1: Understanding drama

What's assessed:

- Knowledge and understanding of drama and theatre
- Study of one set play
- Analysis and evaluation of the work of live theatre makers

How it's assessed:

- Written exam: 1 hour and 45 minutes – open book
- 80 marks ; 40% of GCSE

Component 2: Devising drama (practical)

What's assessed:

- Process of creating devised drama
- Performance of devised drama (students may contribute as performer or designer)
- Analysis and evaluation of own work

How it's assessed:

- Devising log (60 marks); Devised performance (20 marks)
- 80 marks in total; 40% of GCSE

Component 3: Texts in practice (practical)

What's assessed:

- Performance of two extracts from one play (students may contribute as performer or designer)

How it's assessed:

- Performance of Extract 1 (25 marks) and Extract 2 (25 marks)
- 50 marks in total; 20% of GCSE. This component is marked by AQA.

ECONOMICS

Examining Board: Edexcel IGCSE

Economics provides an opportunity to study an academically challenging and ever-changing range of crucial issues in an objective and analytical manner.

Aims of the course

The specification is designed to give students a broad understanding of Economics, and the ability to use knowledge, skills and understanding appropriately in the context of individual countries and the global economy. The content of the syllabus is presented in four sections: *the market system*, *business economics*, *government and the economy*, and *the global economy*. The course provides excellent preparation for the AS and A level courses in Economics, which many students go on to study in the Sixth Form. The insights and skills developed in this subject will be useful for further education and employment.

While the course involves many concepts which pupils come across on a day-to-day basis, the subject also introduces a number of abstract concepts and theories which can pose a challenge to students. IGCSE Economics is intended to be an academic course, and should only be taken by those with a demonstrable interest in the subject. All pupils are expected to keep up with current affairs and follow news and media debate.

Course Content

Section A - The Market System: demand and supply, the role of the market in solving the economic problem, and the labour market. Why do Premier League players get paid more in one week than most people in one year? What causes the price of oil to fluctuate?

Section B - Business Economics: production, competition, and the public and private sectors. Does Apple have a negative impact on the technology market? Do the supermarkets take advantage of their customers and suppliers?

Section C - Government and the Economy: macroeconomic objectives, fiscal & monetary policies, and the relationship between objectives and policies. What impact has the recession had on the UK? What policy tools can the Government use to get the economy growing?

Section D - The Global Economy: globalisation, international trade and exchange rates. Why do we import shoes from the other side of the world? What impact is the growth of China having upon the UK? Does it matter if the pound weakens against the Euro?

Assessment

One externally assessed written paper: a mixture of structured, data response, short-answer, multiple-choice and open-ended questions; 2½ hours, single tier entry.

GEOGRAPHY

Examining Board: CIE IGCSE (0460)

Learners develop a 'sense of place', looking at the world on a range of scales, examining a range of natural and man-made environments, and studying the processes which form them. Pupils look at the ways that people interact with their environment and the challenges and opportunities these interactions present, gaining an insight into cultures and communities.

For the IGCSE course students are entered for three components. Components 1 and 2 are sat as examinations at the end of the Fifth Form. Students also complete one practical component, attending a field trip and writing a coursework project in the Fifth Form.

Component number	Length & marks	What's in the component?	Percentage of total marks?
Component 1	1 hr 45 mins. 75 marks	Exam - Geographical Themes Theme 1) Population and Settlement Theme 2) The Natural Environment Theme 3) Economic development Candidates answer 3 questions, each worth 25 marks.	45%
Component 2	1 hr 30 mins. 60 marks	Exam - Geographical Skills Questions on the paper are resource based. Students interpret and analyse them when answering questions	27.5%
Component 3	60 marks	Coursework School-based assignment of up to 2000 words.	27.5%

Fieldwork:

Students undertake two trips. It is a requirement of component 3 that pupils must complete fieldwork away from the classroom to collect data that is presented, analysed and interpreted in their project. This trip may be in the form of a residential course. As this is a requirement of the course, a parental contribution is kindly requested. Students will also visit the Olympic Park or similar environment in order to further investigate their case studies for Paper 1.

Assessment:

Geographers are assessed on the following broad areas:

Knowledge and understanding - remembering facts and applying them to new situations

Skills and analysis - how you select information and apply geographical understanding

Judgement and decision making - being able to make judgements based on information

<p>GEOGRAPHERS CAN:</p> <p><i>Make a concise report</i></p> <p><i>Handle data</i></p> <p><i>Ask questions and find the answers</i></p> <p><i>Make decisions about an issue</i></p> <p><i>Analyse material</i></p> <p><i>Solve problems</i></p> <p><i>Be independent thinkers</i></p>	<p>GEOGRAPHERS ARE:</p> <p><i>Good communicators</i></p> <p><i>Spatially aware</i></p> <p><i>Socially and environmentally aware</i></p> <p><i>Problem solvers</i></p> <p><i>Good team players</i></p> <p><i>Computer literate</i></p> <p><i>Well rounded, flexible thinkers</i></p>
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(Adapted from source: RGS)

HISTORY

Examining Board: CIE IGCSE (0977)

Introduction

The study of History offers unique opportunities within the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The subject provides an awareness of how the world we live in today was created and how the way in which nations and institutions interact and affect one another is influenced by the past. In addition, it imparts the skills required to build upon that knowledge and develop further understanding of our society and how various sections of our own and other cultures may differ in their perspectives on the world.

Aims of the Course

- To stimulate interest in and enthusiasm about the past;
- To promote the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of human activity in the past;
- To ensure that the candidates' knowledge is rooted in an understanding of the nature and use of historical evidence;
- To promote an understanding of the nature of cause and consequence, continuity and change, and similarity and difference;
- To provide a sound basis for further study and the pursuit of personal interest;
- To encourage international understanding;
- To encourage the development of linguistic and communication skills.

Course Content

The course examines the twentieth century world and begins with the **Depth Study** option on the **Great War 1914-1918**, a period of social and political upheaval that shook the Western world to its core and quite possibly the defining chapter of the last century. During the commemoration of the Great War Centenary, the annual Fourth Form trip to the **Battlefields of Flanders and the Somme** will be offered to students and constitutes an important means by which the realities of life on the Western Front are brought to life. **International Relations since 1919** is our **Core Content** option. From the end of the First World War we study the impact of the search for peace in the inter-war period and the failure of that search in the causes of World War II. Candidates then examine the Cold War from 1945 to 1989, which in turn dominated global events in the post-war world. The final component of this course is the **Coursework** assignment, worth 27% of the marks. This is on the significance of America's entry into World War One, thus enabling students to reinforce their understanding of the Depth Study.

Assessment

Candidates must demonstrate the following:

AO1: The ability to recall, select, organise and deploy knowledge of the syllabus content.

AO2: An understanding of:

- change and continuity, cause and consequence, similarity and difference;
- the motives, emotions, intentions and beliefs of people in the past.

AO3: The ability to understand, interpret, evaluate and use a range of sources as evidence, in their historical context.

How are students assessed?

Candidates must take Paper 1 and Paper 2 and Paper 3 (Coursework).

Paper 1

Section A

Candidates answer **two** questions on the Core Content (*International Relations since 1919*).

Section B

Candidates answer **one** question on a Depth Study (*The First World War 1914-1918*).

40% of total marks

Paper 2

Candidates answer a series of questions on **one** Prescribed Topic.

The prescribed topic will be one 20th century topic, taken from the Core Content (*International Relations since 1919*).

33% of total marks

Paper 3 - Coursework (Centre-based assessment)

Candidates produce one piece of coursework on the First World War, which consists of an essay of approximately 2,000 words.

27% of total marks

Excursions

A three-day Battlefields Trip takes place during first week of the Autumn Term half term in the Fourth Form. Although places are limited, candidates are strongly advised to experience an excursion which has an educational and cultural value reaching beyond the assessment objectives of IGCSE History.

MODERN LANGUAGES (FRENCH, GERMAN & SPANISH)

French	Edexcel IGCSE
German	Edexcel IGCSE
Spanish	Edexcel IGCSE

Aims of the courses

- To foster an interest in the language and culture of the countries concerned.
- To promote an interest in language as an intellectual discipline.
- To increase pupils' confidence in the written and spoken language.
- To enable pupils to enjoy using languages.
- To provide a sound basis for A level or Pre-U for those candidates who wish to continue.

Homework (2 x 40 minutes per week)

Candidates can expect to have at least one written homework each week. This could be a piece of writing, a grammatical exercise, or a reading or listening comprehension. The other homework will frequently be vocabulary learning (approximately 30 words) and this will often be tested.

Half-term grades take account of the performance in homework and in class. Pupils' contribution to oral work, therefore, will always be significant.

Course content

There are three parts to the Edexcel IGCSE:

Unit 1 (25%)

The listening paper is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form. All material is based on the IGCSE topics. The examination lasts approximately 45 minutes and pupils listen to recorded material in the target language and answer questions in English and French/German/Spanish.

Unit 2 (50%)

The reading and writing paper is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form. The examination lasts 90 minutes. In the reading section, pupils read a variety of texts based on the IGCSE topics and answer questions in English and French/German/Spanish. In the written section, pupils write answers to two tasks based on the IGCSE topics in French/German/Spanish. The first task requires an answer of approximately 50 words and the second task requires an answer of approximately 150 words.

Unit 3 (25%)

The oral examination is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form. The examination lasts approximately 10 minutes and is made up of two parts. In section A, pupils speak about a picture that they have chosen in advance of the examination for one minute in French/German/Spanish. They then respond to questions on the picture for 3 minutes. Section B consists of a general conversation on two of the IGCSE topics and lasts approximately 6 minutes. Students will not know in advance which topics they will speak about in section B of the oral examination. The oral is recorded and marked externally.

IGCSE topics

Topic area A	Home and abroad
Topic area B	Education and employment
Topic area C	House, home and daily routines
Topic area D	The modern world and the environment
Topic area E	Social activities, fitness and health

Accelerated French

A number of our most talented linguists will sit their IGCSE course one year early. There are currently two accelerated IGCSE French sets and these pupils started the IGCSE course in the Third Form. After having taken the IGCSE examination at the end of the Fourth Form, some pupils will prepare for the possibility of taking up the prestigious Pre-U course in the Sixth Form.

MUSIC

Examining Board: CIE

Component 1: Listening (40%, 70 marks)

1 hour 15 minutes written examination Externally assessed

This component is based on CD recordings supplied by Cambridge.

The main focus of the 5 sections is as follows:

Section A: Unprepared Western Repertoire: Extracts from two works which may be instrumental and/or vocal, selected from Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods and the 20th Century.

Section B: Unprepared World Music: Extracts from two pieces selected from African and Arab, Latin American, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian and Japanese traditions.

Section C: Skeleton Score: A single extract in which candidates will be expected to undertake simple rhythmic and/or melodic dictation.

Section D: World Music – Prescribed Focus

Section E: Western Set Work

Component 2: Performing (30%, 50 Marks)

Coursework Internally assessed and externally moderated

Candidates must:

- (i) Sing or play individually – either one piece or two contrasting pieces, which may be on the same or on different instruments, **and**
- (ii) Sing or play in an ensemble – either one piece or two contrasting pieces, which may be on the same or on different instruments.

The total playing time of the two performances should be between 4 and 10 minutes.

The recommended minimum standard before starting the course is Grade 5.

Component 3: Composing (30%, 50 Marks)

Coursework Internally assessed and externally moderated

Candidates submit **TWO** compositions, either contrasting in character or written for different forces.

At least **ONE** composition must be written in a Western, tonal style and must demonstrate familiarity with the basic principles of traditional harmonic language; this composition must be fully notated using staff notation and the score submitted with the recording.

The other piece may be in any style of the candidate's choice and may be notated in whatever form of notation is appropriate to the music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Examining Board: AQA (8582)

The course involves both theoretical and practical sessions reflecting the need to apply acquired knowledge to component parts of the course. In addition, there is an expectation that students will develop their skills through attendance at games, extra-curricular sport training and with clubs.

Aims of the course:

- Lays an appropriate foundation for further study of the subject at A Level. Links well with existing Biology knowledge candidates will have learnt.
- Written paper based on factors that affect sporting performance and participation.
- Analysis and improvement of the pupils' chosen sports.

Assessment

Exam

- 2 x 75-minute written papers: a mix of multiple choice, short and extended answers.
- Paper 1: The human body and movement in physical activity and sport
78 marks; 30% of GCSE mark
- Paper 2: Socio-cultural influences and well-being in physical activity and sport
78 marks; 30% of GCSE mark

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

- 3 assessments: 1 Team, 1 Individual and another, all as player/performer role
- Total 100 marks; 40% of GCSE mark
- For each of their three activities, students will be assessed in skills in progressive drills (10 marks per activity) and in the full context (15 marks per activity).
- Students will be assessed on their analysis (15 marks) and evaluation (10 marks) of performance to bring about improvement in one activity.

Course Content

The course takes as its focus the securing of the knowledge and understanding needed for the candidate to take responsibility for his/her own physical growth and development as part of a personal healthy active lifestyle. The course explores the following topics:

- Applied anatomy and physiology
- Movement analysis
- Physical training
- Use of data
- Sports psychology
- Socio-cultural influences
- Health, fitness and well-being

Practical Assessment

See above. There is a broad range of assessment tasks (i.e. sports/physical activities) in which candidates can choose to be assessed. Details of activity areas and choices of activity are available from the AQA website or the GCSE specification.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Examining Board: Edexcel (Specification B, full course)

Aims of the course

The twenty-first century is an exciting and challenging time in which to live. A greater awareness of different cultures, together with advances in science and technology, raises questions of identity (who we are), theology (what we can believe) and ethics (how we should behave). The Religious Studies GCSE affords students the opportunity to explore the important issues and ideas that have shaped our world through the study of Christianity and Islam. Students will not only attain a sound background knowledge in relevant areas of study; the course will also help them develop their critical skills and their ability to put forward their own arguments clearly.

Assessment

There is no coursework. Students sit two papers, which will include both short- and longer-answer discussion questions:

- 1) **Christianity: Religion and Ethics**
- 2) **Islam: Religion, Peace and Conflict**

Course Content

While students will be able to draw on a whole range of ideas, the course is studied from both a Christian and Muslim perspective.

Christianity: Religion and Ethics

After a study of Christian beliefs about God's nature, this paper focusses on Christian ethics relating to human relationships including marriage and the family, and matters of life and death including beliefs about an afterlife and questions of medical ethics such as euthanasia and abortion.

Islam: Religion, Peace and Conflict

After a study of Islamic beliefs about God's nature, this paper focusses on Muslim responses to crime and punishment, and issues relating to peace and conflict including extremism and different understandings of Holy War.

HIGHER PROJECT QUALIFICATION

LEVEL 2 (EQUIVALENT TO GCSE)

Course Aims

The main aim of the *Higher Project Qualification* (HPQ) is to allow pupils to investigate in depth a subject of their own choice. The HPQ takes the form of a voluntary research project and dissertation that is completed in the pupils' own time. It enables pupils to develop as inquisitive and independent learners. They are assessed on their ability to plan, manage, complete and review their project. It is assessed by their designated HPQ tutor at St Albans School and externally moderated by the exam board.

Course Structure

Students embark on an individual research project in June of the Fourth Form, following briefing meetings earlier in the year. Based on their interests, each pupil is assigned an HPQ tutor, who gives guidance on how best to frame a title to create a workable research question.

Example questions have included:

- Is a fire-breathing dragon scientifically plausible?
- To what extent can video games be considered an artistic achievement?
- Should children be forced to exercise?
- How much power does advertising have and how effective can the use of shock be?
- Should human cloning be allowed?
- Should the time window for abortion be shortened?
- Should the growth of hybrid embryos be permitted for scientific and/or medical research?
- Have smoking habits and attitudes changed since the indoor ban?
- Do food labels affect how people shop?

Examination

The research and commentary form a draft dissertation that is completed over the summer holiday and shared with the HPQ tutor in twilight sessions during the autumn term of the Fifth Form. The final version is a project of approximately 2,500 words that is completed by February half-term, followed up by a five-minute oral presentation to a small group of students and two teacher-assessors in late February. There is no written examination.

The emphasis throughout is on the development of skills, rather than the learning of factual content and the pupils are encouraged to reflect on the process of completing the project, and what they have found particularly difficult or straightforward.

The HPQ is a 'Level 2 Project Qualification'. It is graded A*-E and is equivalent in size, status and SCATT points to half a GCSE level. Further details of the HPQ can be obtained from Dr Tanner.