



ST ALBANS
SCHOOL

GCSE Choices 2022

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(I)GCSEs

In your experience of school so far, 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 originally designed specifically for international students, IGCSEs are now commonly taught in independent schools in this country. They are accepted as equal to GCSEs by all universities and employers, although they tend not to be recognised in Department for Education league tables. Both GCSEs and IGCSEs are rigorous in their approach to subject learning, so the choice between them is largely determined by the nature of the individual subject syllabus and its intrinsic educational value. We make such decisions based only on what is best for you, providing the courses that we believe will offer you the best educational opportunity in helping to prepare you for future life and study.

Later, in the Sixth Form, you will specialise further and study subjects at Advanced (A) Level. University entrance is determined mainly by your results at A 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 if any changes are necessary, they 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 courses are linear; that is, taking modules early in the course is not allowed. All examinations must be taken together at the end of the course.

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 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. (In the case of Mathematics, students must achieve a grade 8 or the required level in the School's internal course that is undertaken from January of the Fifth Form)
- 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:

Choices Assembly

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 homework? 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 access websites, posts or blogs 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 most 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: forexample, to study Modern Languages at university you will almost certainly need to have studied two modern languages at (I)GCSE, rather than doing one modern language and taking a broad range of other subjects. Dr Hacksley (Assistant Head: Higher Education and Careers) is available for consultation on university entrance and careers.

THE COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

The compulsory subjects account for six (I)GCSEs:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ENGLISH LITERATURE

MATHEMATICS

BIOLOGY

CHEMISTRY

PHYSICS

Pupils must also take a modern foreign language, choosing from *FRENCH, GERMAN, CHINESE (MANDARIN)* or *SPANISH*

ENGLISH

Examining Board:

Edexcel

4EA1 IGCSE English Language A

4ET1 IGCSE English Literature

- English in the Fourth and Fifth Forms constitutes a combined course, taught over two years, certifying pupils for two qualifications: English and English Literature.
- For English Language, pupils follow a course combining external coursework and terminal assessments that examine traditional skills and aptitudes: we believe that this suits our students better than an exam-only qualification.
- For English Literature, there is an interesting range of texts engaging with both modern and canonical texts, and a requirement to compare studied texts to unseen extracts.
- 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 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 and 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 is one exam in English Language (with two sections; roughly, a comprehension section and a writing section), as well as two coursework essays. English Literature is assessed via two 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 Exam (60%)

There is one paper. The exam is 2 hours and 15 minutes long and is split into two sections (A and B).

Section A is a mixture of short and long comprehension-style questions related to one previously taught non-fiction text and one previously unseen extract. Students will be taught the necessary non-fiction texts, as well as unseen skills, during their English lessons.

Section B is a single piece of transactional writing (i.e., writing to argue, inform, advise etc.), asking candidates to write for a specific purpose and for a specific audience.

Both sections of the paper are worth 45 marks.

English Language Coursework (40%)

Students will write two essays (each worth 20% of their overall mark). The first assignment is an analytical response to two taught poetry and/or prose texts. The second assignment is a piece of imaginative writing. Students will be thoroughly prepared for both tasks, and will have feedback provided on draft work, in accordance with Edexcel regulations, before the submission of final pieces. Texts for these tasks will be taught from the outset of the course, but the writing and submission of the final pieces will take place in the Autumn and Spring terms of the Fifth Form.

Speaking and Listening Assessment

(Separately Assessed)

Assessed internally and moderated externally, this consists of a ten-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 two papers.

Paper 1 Poetry and Modern Prose

2 hours (60%)

This is in three sections. Section A - Unseen Poetry: one 20-mark essay question exploring the meaning and effects created in an unseen poem. Section B - Anthology Poetry: one 30-mark essay question a choice of two, comparing two poems from the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology. Section C - Modern Prose: one 40-mark essay question from a choice of two on each of the set texts. The total number of marks available is 90.

This is closed book: texts are not allowed in the examination. However, students will be provided with the anthology poems.

Paper 2 Modern Drama and Literary Heritage Texts 1½ hours (40%)

This is in two sections. Section A - Modern Drama: one 30-mark essay question from a choice of two on each of the set texts. Section B - Literary Heritage Texts: one 30-mark essay question from a choice of two on each of the set texts. The total number of marks available is 60.

This is open book: prescribed editions of set texts are allowed in the examination.

MATHEMATICS

Examining Board: Edexcel IGCSE 4MA1

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 (including sets)*
- *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 appropriate to each pupil, with higher sets able to go beyond IGCSE content and level at times. 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 some additional Mathematics for the rest of the Fifth Form. This new content introduces many of the concepts and material in A Level 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 open to those who achieve an 8 or 9 grade in the IGCSE; those who achieve a 7 may also be allowed to go on to the A Level on the basis of good performances in assessments during the Fifth Form course. Strong performances in these assessments will also be needed by those who intend to study A Level Further Mathematics in the Sixth Form.

SCIENCES

Examining Board: Edexcel IGCSE

Pupils will study and sit three separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. They have already started these IGCSE courses in the Third Form and will continue with them for the next two years. We hope that pupils 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.

BIOLOGY

Pupils 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 pupils 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 human and plant physiology, how characteristics are inherited and how our lives revolve around the use of biological resources. Biology is a rapidly expanding subject and so pupils 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.

CHEMISTRY

The IGCSE Chemistry course provides pupils with a good grounding in the unifying patterns and themes that run through Chemistry. Pupils 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 pupils build up their knowledge from the fundamental particles in atoms, through to complex molecules and how these molecules interact with each other, blending especially well to the A Level course, should students look to take the subject in the Sixth Form. By the end of the course, pupils 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.

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. Over their three years, pupils 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.

Pupils 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 of the sciences.

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

DRAMA

ECONOMICS

FRENCH

GEOGRAPHY

GERMAN

GREEK (CLASSICAL)

HISTORY

LATIN

MANDARIN CHINESE

MUSIC

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

SPANISH

The details for French, German, Mandarin Chinese, 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 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 independence, confidence, enthusiasm, and a sense of achievement.

Course Content and Assessment

Component 1 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 2 Examination 40% of total mark

The examination time is 10 hours (usually spread over two consecutive days). Candidates are given up to ten weeks to prepare; they choose one theme to interpret from ten 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:

A01: Candidates record responses from direct experience, observation and imagination and develop ideas for their work, investigating visual and other sources of information.

A02: 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. Candidate's review, modify and refine work as it progresses through process to outcome, realising their intentions.

A03: 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.

A04: Candidates present personal responses and realise intentions. They make informal connections with the work of others.

Materials

Essential materials are provided such as sketchbooks, brushes and pencils. Portfolios are recommended and can be bought through the Department.

Excursions

Several gallery visits are made during the course. These are usually to London based galleries. Pupils can also 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.

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, 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. We enter students for Papers 1, 3 and 4 as follows:

Paper 1 Unprepared Comprehension and Translation	1 hour 30 mins	50%
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Paper 3 Prose Literature	1 hour	25%
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Paper 4 Verse Literature	1 hour	25%
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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%
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Paper 3 Prose Literature	1 hour	25%
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Paper 4 Verse Literature	1 hour	25%
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There is no coursework option.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Examining Board: CAIE 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, including 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;
- the skills necessary to apply understanding to solve computer-based problems using a high-level programming language.

Course Content

Computer Systems

- Data representation
- Data transmission
- Hardware
- Software
- The internet and its uses
- Automated and emerging technologies

Algorithms, Programming and Logic

- Algorithm design and problem-solving
- Programming
- Databases
- Boolean logic

Assessment

Two examinations at the end of the Fifth Form, each of 1 hour 45 minutes: Each paper contributes 50% of the overall mark and they both contain short-answer and structured questions. Both examinations are externally assessed; there is no controlled assessment.

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

Examining Board: AQA

Design and Technology is an exciting, dynamic area of the curriculum where pupils 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. Pupils explore ways in which aesthetic, technical, economic, environmental, ethical, and social dimensions interact to shape decision-making and their designing and manufacture. There is also a strong emphasis on the practical application of mathematical and scientific principles.

Pupils 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 pupils and parents throughout the options process.

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 be able to study technical principles in greater depth through a detailed 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, and 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 pupils 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 pupils 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. Pupils should also be aware that it is essential 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 grade 4 (which is well below the school average), they will not be entered for the final examinations.

DRAMA

Examining Board: Edexcel (IDR0)

Drama is an exciting, creative, stimulating, and challenging course and has been designed to help pupils 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. With written work dominating over the practical elements of the course (70:30), students need to be able to write analytically and critically, developing their understanding and knowledge of theatre, performance and design. Pupils should also gain confidence in interpersonal skills, problem solving, and analytical skills, and when collaborating with others. Evening theatre trips and practical workshops with visiting industry professionals are organised as part of the course and pupils will have the opportunity to perform in a local festival.

The course offers the opportunity for pupils to participate in a performance. All pupils devise drama, explore texts practically and work on two text-based performances. Pupils can choose to develop as a:

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

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

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

Component 1: Devising (IDR0/01)

What's assessed:

- Process of creating devised drama
- Performance of devised drama (pupils may contribute as a performer or a designer)
- Written analysis and evaluation of own work

How it's assessed:

- Devising log (45 marks); Devised performance (15 marks)
- 60 marks in total; 40% of GCSE

Component 2: Performance from Text (IDR0/02)

What's assessed:

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

How it's assessed:

- Performance of Extract 1 (24 marks) and Extract 2 (24 marks)
- 48 marks in total; 20% of GCSE. This component is marked by Edexcel.

Component 3: Theatre Makers in practice (IDR0/03)

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 30 minutes
- 60 marks; 40% of GCSE

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 pupils 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 A Level course in Economics, which many pupils 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 some 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 1.1 - 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 1.2 - Business Economics: production, competition, and the public and private sectors. Does Apple have a negative impact on the technology market? Do supermarkets take advantage of their customers and suppliers?

Section 2.1 - Government and the Economy: macroeconomic objectives, fiscal and 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 2.2 - 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

Two externally assessed written papers: a mixture of structured, data response, short answer, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions; 1½ hours each, single tier entry.

GEOGRAPHY

Examining Board: CAIE IGCSE 9-1 (0976)

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 in which people interact with their environment, and the challenges and opportunities these interactions present, gaining insight into cultures and communities.

Component number	Length & marks	What's in the component?	Percentage of total marks
Component 1	1 hr 45 mins; 75 marks (weighted to 100 marks)	Exam (Paper 1) – 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 (Paper 2) - Geographical Skills Questions on the paper are resource based. Pupils interpret and analyse them when answering questions	27.5%
Component 3	1 hr 30 mins; 60 marks	Exam (Paper 4) - Alternative to Coursework Candidates answer two compulsory questions, completing a series of written tasks	27.5%

Fieldwork

Pupils undertake two-day trips to the Olympic Park and to a local river. It is a requirement of component 3 that pupils must complete fieldwork away from the classroom to collect data that is then presented, analysed, and interpreted, and this also provides opportunities to cement topics studies in Paper 1. This trip may occasionally be conducted in the form of a residential course. As this is a requirement of the course, a parental contribution may be requested where necessary.

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, evaluation and decision making** - being able to make informed judgements

<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: Royal Geographical Society)

HISTORY

Examining Board: AQA GCSE

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 of 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

Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World

Russia, 1894-1945: Tsardom and Communism Conflict
and Tension: The Inter-War Years, 1918-1939

Paper 2: Shaping the Nation

Britain: Health and the People, c. 1000 to the present-day
Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603

Assessment

Paper 1: Understanding the modern world
In Section A, there is a choice of four period studies, each with a focus on two key developments in a country's history over at least a 50-year period. In Section B, there is a choice of five wider world depth studies. These focus on international conflict and tension.
Paper 2: Shaping the nation
In Section A, there is a choice of three thematic studies, which look at key developments in Britain over a long period. In Section B, there is a choice of four British depth studies incorporating the study of a specific historic environment.
How both papers are assessed <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written exam: 2 hours• 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation, and grammar)• 50% of GCSE

MODERN LANGUAGES (FRENCH, GERMAN, MANDARIN CHINESE & SPANISH)

French, German, Spanish: Edexcel IGCSE; Mandarin Chinese: Edexcel GCSE

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 for those candidates who wish to continue.

Homework (2 x 40 minutes per week)

Pupils 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.

Grades (other than internal examination grades) take account of the performance in homework and in class. Pupils' contribution to oral work, therefore, will always be significant.

Course content for French, German and Spanish

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 30 minutes and pupils listen to recorded material in the target language and answer questions in French/German/Spanish.

Unit 2 (50%)

The reading and writing paper are taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form. The examination lasts 105 minutes. In the reading section, pupils read a variety of texts based on the IGCSE topics and answer questions in 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 60-75 words and the second task requires an answer of approximately 150 words. There is also a grammar section which is based on the key grammatical structures of the IGCSE course.

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. They are asked 5 questions and they should speak for two to three minutes. Section B consists of a general conversation on two of the IGCSE topics and lasts approximately six minutes. Pupils 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	Personal life and relationships
Topic area D	The world around us
Topic area E	Social activities, fitness and health

In French, pupils are placed in sets, with pupils in the top set going beyond the requirements of that course to be well prepared for French A Level and French study in Higher Education.

Course content for Mandarin Chinese

There are four parts to the Edexcel GCSE and each element is worth 25% of the total marks.

Unit 1

The listening paper is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form. All material is based on the GCSE topics. The examination lasts approximately 40 minutes and pupils listen to recorded material in the target language and answer questions in English.

Unit 2

The oral examination is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form. The examination lasts approximately 12 minutes and is made up of three parts. In section A, pupils complete a role-play activity. In section B, pupils speak about a picture that is chosen for them. In section C, pupils conduct a conversation based on the GCSE topics.

Unit 3

The reading paper is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form and lasts 50 minutes. Pupils are required to read texts in Chinese and to answer questions in English and in Chinese. In addition, pupils are required to translate a short text from Chinese into English.

Unit 4

The writing paper is taken by pupils in the Summer Term of the Fifth Form and lasts 85 minutes. Pupils complete two written exercises in Chinese and complete one translation activity from English into Chinese.

GCSE topic areas

1. Identity and culture
2. Local area, holiday, travel
3. School
4. Future aspirations, study, and work
5. International and global dimension

MUSIC

Examining Board: CAIE

Component 1: Listening (40%, 70 marks)

1 hour 15 minutes written examination Externally assessed

This component is based on CD recordings supplied by the exam board. The 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 FocusSection

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 3.

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 pupils will develop their skills through attendance at games, at co-curricular sport and training, and with clubs. **The Department will assess pupils' practical skills to ensure that these are the right level for the course.**

Aims of the course:

- Lays an appropriate foundation for further study of the subject at A Level. Links well with topics that pupils will have covered in Biology.
- 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 in player/performer role
- Total 100 marks; 40% of GCSE mark
- For each of their three activities, pupils will be assessed in skills in progressive drills (10 marks per activity) and in the full context (15 marks per activity).
- Pupils 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 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. Pupils 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. Pupils sit two papers, which will include both short and long-answer discussion questions:

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

Course Content

While pupils 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 to 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 to issues relating to peace and conflict, including extremism and different understandings of Holy War.

HIGHER PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE)

Examining Board: AQA (7992)

Aims of the course

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

Pupils embark on an individual research project in the Fourth Form, following briefing meetings. 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 started in the Fourth Form and completed over the summer holiday and shared with the HPQ tutor in twilight sessions. The final version is a project of approximately 2,500 words that is completed by shortly after the October half-term of the Fifth Form. Just before the October half term, pupils give a five-minute oral presentation to a small group of fellow pupils and two teacher-assessors. There is no written examination.

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

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

