



16+ Admissions FAQs

- *I'm interested in a St Albans School education for my son or daughter, where do I start?*

Under normal circumstances, the best place to start is to come into the School in person to see what makes St Albans School such a wonderful place to learn. We offer two 16+ Open Evenings (21/9/2022 and 13/10/2022) in the Autumn Term and the opportunity to view the School with one of our prefects. Please contact the Admissions Team for information or visit our website to view our virtual content admissions@st-albans.herts.sch.uk

- *What is the registration deadline for 16+?*

For 16+ there is no deadline as such, however **scholarship candidates** must register by **31 October** of Year 11. Registration is done electronically via our website homepage and for scholarship registration, please contact the registrar registrar@st-albans.herts.sch.uk.

- *Do you offer 16+ Scholarships and Bursaries*

Yes, a Bursary is means-tested funding provided by the School to assist pupils in obtaining a place at St Albans School when it wouldn't otherwise be accessible. Assistance generally ranges from 40% to 100%. A 16+ Scholarship is awarded for outstanding performance or potential and carries a small amount of financial remission (5% to 25%). Music and Academic Scholarships are available at 16+.

- *What is the format for the Academic Scholarship?*

All our Sixth Form students study four A Levels. For scholarships, papers are taken in two of those prospective A Levels. There is also a Verbal Reasoning paper and an interview on the scholarship day which takes place on 12 November 2022. Current guidelines permitting, this day will take place on the School site. An application can be obtained from the Registrar registrar@st-albans.herts.sch.uk

- *What is the format for the Music Scholarship?*

The Music Scholarship will be taken in School on the afternoon of Wednesday 16 November. There is an audition and two interviews. Candidates should have achieved distinction standard, or close to it, at Grade 7 or 8 of the Associated Board Examination in one instrument and/or singing. A second instrument would be an advantage but is not essential. Apply on our website or email the Registrar for an application registrar@st-albans.herts.sch.uk

- *I am interested in applying for a Bursary, what do I need to do?*

You can indicate on your online registration form that you would like to be considered for a Bursary. The Admissions Team will then be in touch to discuss the next steps. The level of funding awarded is usually between 40-100%. The deadline to apply is 30 November.

- *How much are the fees per term?*

The current fees for £7,094 per term or £21,282 per year. These are subject to review in the Summer of 2023.



- *I've completed the registration form, when will I hear from the School again?*

We will request a reference and predicted grades from your child's current school. Once returned, we will be in touch. Where the grades and references meet our 16+ entry requirements we will offer an interview.

- *Where do most new entrants come from at 16+?*

We receive applications from boys and girls across Hertfordshire and North London but also further afield where candidates may be in a boarding environment and wish to switch to being a day scholar. Our new entrants are predominantly girls and largely girls that may feed in from a single-sex environment and would like the opportunity to experience a mixed Sixth Form.

- *How many applicants join and what is the ratio of girls?*

Approximately 45 to 60 new applicants join our Sixth form. The Girls will account for a quarter to a third of the cohort when combined with our fifth form boys that move into L6. We do not have an upper limit as such but the size of each Sixth form year will be approximately 160 to 180 pupils.

- *What schools do your current Sixth Form joiners come from?*

Abbot's Hill, Beaumont, Bedford School, Bishop's Stortford College, British International School Nigeria, Habs Boys, Habs Girls, Haileybury, Kellett (Hong Kong), Monks Walk School, North London Collegiate, Palmers Green High School, Parmiters, Presdales, Queenswood, QE Boys, Richard Hale, Roundwood Park, Rugby School, Sandringham, Sir John Lawes, St Albans Girls' School, St Albans High School for Girls, St Columba's College, St George's Harpenden, St Helens Northwood, St John's Enfield, St Margaret's Bushey, The Swaminarayan School, Verulam School.

- *When and how will we find out if a place will be offered?*

In accordance with the North London Consortium, offers will be posted on 30 November in the case of Scholarship candidates or the fortnight following interview, for subsequent candidates.

- *What does a typical day at St Albans look like?*

Morning registration is at 8.35am. Abbey, Assemblies and Tutor time take place until 9.15am. There are six 50-minute lessons per day and academic lessons finish at 4.00pm. Pupils who are staying for one of the many evening clubs, sports practice or clinics may use the late coach service which departs at 6.00pm. Lower Sixth Form pupils have two study periods during the week. These are not free periods but specific study opportunities.

- *How is the Lower Sixth year timetabled?*

Students have six lessons per week for each of their four A levels. In most cases, this is split between two teachers. They also have a lesson of enrichment, a study lesson with their tutor, two lessons of games and two lessons on a Friday afternoon doing a chosen extension activity. Additional study periods (two per week) are allocated within their subject lessons for private study supervised by their subject teachers.



How is the Upper Sixth year timetabled?

In the Upper Sixth there will be 18 lessons per week timetabled for the three A Levels, this means there are 6 lessons of private study. If a student continues with four A Levels then they will have 24 timetabled lessons for their subjects. There is also a study lesson with their Tutor, an extended project lesson, and an enrichment lecture as well as two lessons of Games. Students may have an academic challenge seminar also timetabled dependent upon their chosen university path. Students will be given permission to attend up to five university open days.

Some FAQ's per A Level subject area from our Heads of Department that you may find helpful:

ART

How is the course structured?

It is a two-year course with the examination board, OCR. It is composed of two components: A personal investigation (60%) and an externally set task (40%). The personal investigation has two integrated elements: a portfolio of practical work and a related study which explores the context in which their chosen practical area of study exists.

Is there a house style?

There is no house style. We see every student as an individual and aim to develop their strengths and weaknesses.

Do I need a GCSE in Art to study the subject at A Level?

We believe that having a GCSE in the subject allows students to have a smooth transition from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5. Students who studied GCSE Art have a key advantage in understanding key terms, methodology of the course and the commitment needed to perform well in this practical subject. If GCSE art has not been taken a recent portfolio of work must be submitted for consideration.

Does the subject require a lot of work?

Yes! As with other A Levels we expect students to be responsible and independent in their approach to their coursework commitments. You will need to be able to plan your time carefully and meet internal deadlines.

Can I study Photography at A Level?

Whilst we do not offer an A Level in Photography, students follow the Fine Art specification. The following are some of the techniques available to learners in Fine Art: mark making, mixed-media, casting, glazing, collage, intaglio, photographic documentation, and digital manipulation.

What careers are open to me if I study A Level Art?

Art and design students are highly entrepreneurial and self-motivated and may look to become an architect, fine artist, sculptor, or gallery assistant. There are however many other careers available to those who can envision, design, and create. Whether you choose to specialise in Fine Art or the History of Art, the skills you gain are likely to be highly valued and transferable to many sectors.



BIOLOGY

How much practical work do you do at A Level?

Lots! There are key practical skill areas that comprise the practical endorsement for A Level Biology, including skills such as microscopy, dissection, making quantitative measurement and research. These are embedded into the course through a large number of practical activities.

Do I need A Level Chemistry to study Biology at A Level?

No, it's not an absolute requirement, but you do need at least a 7 in GCSE Chemistry and Biology. It is recommended to take Chemistry as it supports the biochemical nature of the course and that subject combination opens up many future avenues of study and careers.

How much Maths is there in A Level Biology?

Your Maths skills must be good. A sound knowledge of GCSE Maths, and ideally Maths at A Level will provide you with great support in the subject. Students who study Maths alongside Biology find it very helpful with the quantitative and statistical components of the course.

CHEMISTRY

Is it a massive jump from I/GCSE to A Level?

Yes, but not insurmountable. It takes great organisation and working consistently throughout your first term to ensure a smooth transition.

Is there a lot of Maths?

Yes. You have to be especially strong in Algebra.

What combination of subjects works well if I'm taking Chemistry?

Chemistry and at least one other Science is a good combination. If combining with practical subjects be aware of the time those subjects will consume and the time you need to invest across your subjects.

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

Do I need GCSE Classical Civilisation?

No and in fact this is not offered as a GCSE at St Albans School.

I do not know anything about the subject - does that mean I should not take it?

Classical Civilisation is such a broad subject, encompassing Epic Literature (the Iliad + the Aeneid), Love and Relationships (dealing with philosophical, literary, + archaeological evidence for all different relationships) and The Invention of the Barbarian (how the idea of the other originated and became a major theme in the Classical World), that it compliments Humanity subjects and offers a contrast to STEM subjects.

Very often, our students opt for Classical Civilisation as a fourth A Level and most students continue with some branch of Classical Studies at University, such is their enjoyment of it.



Do I have to like reading and writing essays?

You will need to read the plays and texts covered by the course as well as scholarship and background reading. Each lesson is improved by class discussion and considering different opinions and each module is examined by a written paper.

What type of student does it appeal to?

The course attracts those with an interest in the Classical World, those who like learning how contemporary thoughts, ideas and practices originated, and those who like comparing + contrasting ancient and modern themes and beliefs.

How many students are there in a year?

Classes range from two to ten; but they are always small. This promotes personal learning and excellent teacher/student relations.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Do I need to be able to program to take this A Level?

Yes, you must be a confident programmer using a language such as Python. You should be able to demonstrate this in a programming assessment and interview. A 7 in Maths is required to study SC at A Level.

What is the main programming language used on the A Level?

We use Java.

Can I access more information / borrow a book / see some teaching notes?

Internal: Yes, book a meeting with Ms D'Cruz and/or talk to a current A Level pupil.

External: Yes, please email Ms D'Cruz and I will direct you to some resources rdcruz@st-albans.herts.sch.uk

D&T

How many pupils take A Level D&T?

In the Lower Sixth, 2020 we have one set of ten. Boys and Girls take D&T and between five and seven pupils will continue to take D&T to Upper Sixth.

What is on offer alongside the D&T Curriculum?

As you would expect, much goes on beyond the classroom and students pursue their interests through involvement in various D&T clubs and activities. We also compete in a number of engineering and technological competitions and challenges throughout the year. We are an Arkwright affiliated school and are keen to encourage students to explore the career opportunities within all fields of Design and Engineering.

Is there a great volume of work?

Being a practical subject there is a broad but manageable volume of work. Students need to be committed to their work and manage their time well to produce work that they will be proud of. There are three clinics offered each week after school where pupils can access the workshops and staff expertise.

What do pupils go on to do afterwards?

Most pupils will go on to study Engineering, Product Design or Architecture at University.



DRAMA

How are Students assessed at A Level?

There are three components, assessing students on both practical skills and theoretical knowledge. All components are completed in Year 13, but students will experience the components in the form of mock exams during Year 12.

Component 1 Devising (40%)

A practical devised performance and a written portfolio

Students can also be assessed as designers.

Component 2 Text in Performance (20%)

Practical performances from two different texts

Students can also be assessed as designers.

Component 3 Theatre Makers in Practice (40%)

Written exam covering two set texts and a live theatre production.

Are there opportunities to gain performance experience whilst studying A Level Drama and Theatre?

Absolutely! Students take part in many live performances throughout the duration of the course as either performers or designers. We strongly encourage all A Level students to take part in the co-curricular programme on offer including the Main School Production, House Drama and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival to name but a few.

How much time will a student be expected to spend on work outside of lessons?

In comparison to other subjects, you won't receive the same volume of homework in Drama and that's because a significant amount of your time outside of lessons will be used for rehearsals and line learning. Students who opt to take A Level Drama and Theatre are expected to show a high level of commitment to the subject in order to achieve the most out of it.

ECONOMICS

Do I need to have studied Economics at GCSE level to study it at A Level?

No. Our A Level cohort includes students who have studied Economics at GCSE and students who have not. In the first year of their A-Level studies these groups are separated into different class groups (as far as subject choices allow). However, by the end of the first year the level of knowledge and understanding of the subject of these two groups is equal. In the second year of study the groups are mixed.

Does A Level Economics fit well with any other subjects?

With its mixture of essay writing and data analysis, Economics fits with students taking a wide range of other subjects. A 7 at GCSE Maths and English Language is required to take A Level Economics. You will be required to manipulate formulae, calculate percentage changes, create indices and analyse data taken from graphs and tables. The bulk of the examination is based on written answers and the ability to produce logical, coherent essays, which show development of ideas and concepts. This is not a subject for students who are uncomfortable writing long essays. There is some cross-over with the A Level Geography course, with both courses investigating globalisation and the economies of developing countries.

What opportunities do you offer beyond the A Level syllabus?



The Economics Department provides a programme of Economics extension lessons for Lower Sixth Form students in which one or more areas of Economics are explored in a seminar format in much greater depth than required for the A Level course. Last year's course focused on recent developments in Behavioural Economics, a vibrant branch of economic study which examines human behaviour and the extent to which it matches up with traditional economic theories. There are a number of fun and entrepreneurial challenges that students are invited to get involved in.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

How many texts do I have to study at A Level?

You will answer on eight texts in A Level assessments, but you will read more than that during the course. You will be expected to read independently, and as an academic department we aim to stretch and challenge our able pupils, so we study at least one more text than is required in order to give students choice when it comes to the exams.

What range of texts are studied at A Level?

The range can be very wide. All students must study a range of contemporary poetry and the set texts go all the way back to Chaucer and the Middle Ages. The actual texts will depend on teacher choice, but will always include a Shakespeare play, one other play, a volume of poetry to add to the modern one, and two novels. There will be a variety of historical periods, but as well as Shakespeare, one novel will be pre-1900, as will at least one other text.

How does A Level coursework work?

At A Level there is a coursework unit as well as three exams. This unit is a 3000-word essay which compares two texts. It is a chance for independent study, as we encourage students to choose at least one of the texts themselves and to choose their own question. This creates opportunities for independent research and for students to take responsibility for their own academic pursuit.

How big are A Level classes?

Typically, about eight-twelve students, a mixture of boys and girls, which enables plenty of discussion in lessons.

FRENCH

Will I be fluent by the end of the course?

As well as speaking in class, you benefit from a weekly one-to-one session with our French Assistant. By the end of the A Level course you will be able to speak confidently and with a good level of fluency on a range of cultural topics.

What are the main differences between GCSE and A Level? Is there a big jump in difficulty?

At A Level there is much more of a focus on grammatical accuracy. All pupils take a diagnostic test at the beginning of the Autumn Term of the Lower Sixth so that we can offer targeted support. We will revise GCSE grammar points before moving on to more complex structures. A Level students will also be expected to begin to work with authentic texts and audio passages rather than texts created from a limited bank of GCSE words. The A Level course is interesting and challenging and a proactive and inquisitive attitude will enable progress.

Will I read any French literature?



For the A Level exam, you will need to read one literary text in French and study one French film. We will read the text (a novel or play) together and you will be given all the support you need. This is sometimes the element of the A Level course that worries students beforehand, but it is often the part they enjoy the most.

Is there any coursework?

No. The AQA A Level is formed of three examinations taken at the end course.

GEOGRAPHY

Are all exams at the end of two years if you are doing an International Board?

Yes, we take all our exams (2 x AS and 2x A2) at the end of the two-year course together, as we are staying in line with the linear exams of other subjects at St Albans School.

Is there coursework?

No, unlike many of the UK exam boards we do not have any for CIE. We will visit a fieldwork centre in Somerset, to further investigate our case studies and to learn new techniques in analysis and interpretation, but we do not have any investigations to write up.

Are there any trips?

There is one residential trip which looks at rural socioeconomics, sand dunes and coastal protection. This is usually in the Summer Term of L6th but may change due to Covid.

What is your longest marked question?

The longest questions you will need to answer are either 15 or 20 marks. In the AS content (the first two exams) there is one 15-mark question on each paper (Physical/Human Geography). You will expect to write for about 23 minutes on these. This may sound a lot but isn't when you have planning time as well. At A2 these go up slightly to 20 marks, which is about 30 minutes of writing. There are two of these per paper. The rest of the questions on each paper, especially at AS, tend to be quite short so there is a nice balance for those who like essays and those who do not!

GERMAN

Is this the right subject for me?

If you enjoy meeting and talking to people from other countries, finding out about their cultures and learning how language works, then studying A Level German is an excellent choice for you!

What do I need to know, or be able to do, before taking this course?

If you already have knowledge of a variety of topics, and can express your opinions, you are ready to build on this at A Level. At the start of the course, you will be expected to have good vocabulary and an active understanding of verbs, tenses and cases.

What can I pursue after I've completed the course?

People with German skills and knowledge usually have an advantage over people without them. They stand out as talented and successful people, with broad and exciting horizons. Success at A Level German means you will:

- add an international dimension to your personal skills profile which will impress anyone reading your CV



- be in a stronger position to get a job in companies with international links
- be able to work or study in a German-speaking country in later life.

What will I learn?

You will learn about different aspects of German current affairs and culture and be able to use more complex grammar and vocabulary. You will also study and write in German about a film and literary text. You will be able to translate into and out of German. Studying German will also develop your critical thinking, creativity, independence and skills of analysis which are highly valued by universities and employers.

HISTORY

Why should I study History here?

Not only do we offer the unique opportunity to study History inside a medieval gateway, but students are also given the choice to study either medieval or modern history in the Upper Sixth. This is something that a lot of schools do not offer; however, we feel that it allows our students to pursue their own interests and tailor their A Level studies towards their future university choices. We also offer a wide range of co-curricular opportunities, such as essay competitions, monthly lectures from visiting historians and the opportunity to write for our award-winning history magazine, *The Gateway Chronicle*.

Do I need to have studied History at GCSE to take History A Level?

No! While it is certainly helpful to have this existing set of skills and knowledge, it is not essential. As long as you receive a good grade in your English GCSE (a 7 or above), you will be fine.

Are there a lot of essays?

You will typically be set an essay from either side of the course (Britain or Italy) every 2-3 weeks; however, we spend a lot of time planning these in class, so writing them up will be a breeze!

Why do you choose to focus on Italian unification in the Lower Sixth?

As a school, we wanted to offer topics that stretch and challenge our historians, so we avoided the typical twentieth-century histories that so many students study at GCSE. Italy only became a country in 1861 (which many people are surprised to hear!) and the unification process involved wars, economic development and political protest. As such, the topic is extremely varied and you will be pleasantly surprised as to how much you will enjoy it.

LATIN/GREEK

How similar is the A Level to the GCSE?

The A Level is a more intensive form of the GCSE: 50% of the course is Language, 50% is Literature. The Language Paper consists of Verse and Prose translation and Prose Composition- putting English into Latin; different to the GCSE is the fact that there is no prescribed vocabulary list, so building up vocabulary knowledge is crucial. There are two literature texts in the Lower and the Upper Sixth. One verse which is from a book of the Aeneid/ Iliad or Odyssey or a Euripides tragedy and one prose which comes from the famous Orator and legal mind, Cicero in the Latin or in the Greek the Histories of Herodotus or the writings of Plato.



What subjects do those taking Latin also do?

Half of our cohort take STEM subjects, hoping to do medicine, dentistry, or engineering at University, as the analytical nature of Latin appeals to their scientific and orderly mind. The other half are taking humanity subjects and like thoughts, ideas and literature.

What can I do with Latin A Level?

Our students go into a vast array of careers including Law, Management Consultancy, Civil Service, Finance, Medicine and Engineering.

What skills will Latin teach me?

Latin teaches you how to think, analyse and consolidate material and proves you are intelligent and resourceful with the ability to absorb material and present relevant arguments in an educated and eloquent manner. In short, it will always provide a talking point, and set you apart from other candidates.

MATHS

What should a student do over the summer to prepare for the step up to A Level?

We recommend that students work through our preparation pack (sent out to students in the Summer Term); it helps keep the students fluent in their GCSE techniques and ready to begin A Level study.

Are there any options in the content?

The content is fixed, two thirds pure mathematics, and one third applied mathematics (split equally between mechanics and statistics).

How many students study Mathematics in the Sixth Form?

Typically, around three quarters of students study Maths or Maths with Further Maths. This is entirely their choice and not ours.

How do you challenge the most able students?

Students are encouraged to participate in the UKMT Senior Mathematical Challenge, associated follow-on rounds, and the Team Challenge. We run an extra-curricular Sixth Form Club for those with a keen interest in broadening their understanding. Academic Challenge Seminars are also offered; these are used to help prepare the students for pre-interview university assessments as well as the Cambridge STEP examinations.

FURTHER MATHEMATICS

What is the difference between Maths and Further Maths?

Further Maths develops many of the ideas explored in Maths as well as looking at completely new content such as complex numbers and matrices.

Who is Further Maths aimed at?

It is aimed at those who really enjoy Mathematics. Further Maths is also highly desirable, if not required, by many top universities for Mathematics, Science and Engineering courses, as well as Computing and Economics.



Are there any options in the content?

Half of Further Maths is compulsory pure content, but there are options available. Students can decide whether to major in mechanics or statistics and can also study extra pure content if they wish.

MUSIC

How do I sign up for Music Lessons/ Ensembles/ Groups/ Rock band/ Orchestra?

We have 20 visiting Music Teachers who teach a variety of musical instruments in School. We also have a myriad of musical groups. For details please contact musicadmin@st-albans.herts.sch.uk. A link to register for Music lessons and groups will be sent out to all new joiners in the June prior to joining.

Which exam board do you use for A Level Music?

Students sit for the Edexcel A Level. Within the course, students investigate, analyse and evaluate music and its features. Building on this, and by using practical methods, they are encouraged to take a more holistic view of their knowledge, performance and compositional skills.

What sort of time dedication is required for A level?

Students will find the requirements for studying A Level Music are on a par with other practical subjects. However, as all A Level Music students are also performers, they will spend additional time practising their instrument(s).

What combinations of A Level subjects work well with A Level Music?

Absolutely any!

PHILOSOPHY / RELIGIOUS STUDIES

What is the difference between Religious Studies and Philosophy A Level?

Whilst both A Levels involve studying fundamental questions, such as 'What is good?', 'Does God exist?' and 'Am I more than my physical body?', the RS A Level approaches these issues from within a Christian (as well as non-religious) framework and also includes a study of Christian writings (New Testament Studies).

The Philosophy A Level takes an argument centred approach, so students are not only asked to understand, but also to synthesise philosophical arguments and be able to identify inconsistencies/ problems with others. RS tends to involve more essay writing, whereas Philosophy demands concise, rigorous explanations and arguments.

Do I have to have done RS GCSE?

No. Whilst GCSE RS may give some initial advantage to studying RS A Level, it is not significant or long lasting. If you enjoyed the RS GCSE, it is likely you will enjoy the A Level. Philosophy A Level is a new subject that requires no prior knowledge (an appreciation for debate and the consideration of questions regarding our existence, purpose, knowledge and behaviour is more useful). A 7 in English Language *or* History *or* RS is required.

What can I do to prepare for RS or Philosophy A Level or get a feel for what the subject involves?

Read, watch films/series, and listen to podcasts. Do you find moral, spiritual and existential dilemmas and questions raised by them interesting? Do you question why we are here, how we know anything and whether God could exist? If so, you would probably enjoy either A Level.



Can I do both RS and Philosophy A Levels?

Unfortunately, no. There is some shared content, so they are deemed too similar.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Why choose A Level PE?

As a subject it is broad and diverse in the range of content covered and skills developed. Perhaps the strongest incentive for choosing this course is its direct relevance to the student as a performer and how the insights gained in the classroom can be directly applied to improve their performance in their sport.

What is the focus in the course?

In the Lower Sixth there are essentially three content areas – Anatomy & Physiology, Skill learning & Acquisition and understanding historical perspectives and the sociological impact of sport. In the Upper Sixth we study exercise physiology, sport psychology and contemporary issues in sport. The skills developed range from extended writing, critical thinking and video analysis. University applications look to see the study skills developed by students in their A Level subjects and PE comprehensively challenges and develops this.

What does the coursework involve?

The coursework is worth 30% of the final A Level mark and is called the Non-Examined Assessment.

It involves two elements:

- 15% for practical performance in one activity (sport) – assessed over two years and evidence needs to be gathered for submission from performance in a competitive context.
- 15% for written analysis and evaluation of weaknesses in a competitive context. This is taught and guided through in the Upper Sixth year.

How do I decide which practical activity I should do?

At A Level the candidate chooses one sport and must be actively performing in this sport across the two years of the course and playing/performing it competitively. All evidence must be provided in a competitive context and at the highest level of performance possible.

The marks awarded are based on three assessment areas (which vary for each sport) but in essence a candidate has to score well on each of the three areas to score well overall and the marking has to factor in not only the quality of the School but also the quality of the competitive environment.

Therefore, evidence from a higher level of competition has greater weighting than that of a more basic level. Time or distance in some activities may be comparable and this will determine the level of performance (e.g. athletics, swimming), whereas in golf it would be the score over 18 holes in competition and the course length, competition situation that would also have to be factored in. Football at an academy level would be weighted more highly than a school game or Sunday League game.

Evidence of performance needs to be captured and recorded and this can be another factor to weigh up when deciding what activity to do as some lend themselves to this more than others. Recording of performance can often fall on parents, friends etc to facilitate and at School we will support this (hardware can be borrowed). In the performance sports we offer in School we can help provide footage for use when we capture games for analysis. In deciding what activity to choose, these factors need to be considered and we will support candidates to make their choice when they start the course.



PHYSICS

What's in the Physics course at A Level?

The A Level course is a great mixture of developing the core 'canon', central to all Physics, which you have already a good knowledge of, and also some exciting and counter-intuitive new topics in both the Lower and Upper Sixth years. In the first year, you will learn to apply and combine GCSE ideas, studying Newtonian mechanics, waves and interference and circuits; the new material looks at the strange world of quantum physics, particle physics and wave-particle duality. In the second year, you will develop your understanding of the nucleus, radioactivity, rotational mechanics, thermal physics, fields and electromagnetism; new topics cover the history of the birth of new physics and Einstein's theory of special relativity. There is a strong emphasis on practical work and skills of data analysis. This is all explained in much greater detail in the AQA Physics A specification.

Is A Level Physics hard?

Yes. It is regarded as one of the most prestigious A Level subjects, and a good grade in Physics is evidence for the dedication, tenacity and hard work you will have to show throughout the course. Among other skills, A Level Physics equips you to approach problems systematically, present ideas and information clearly, and interpret numerical data. This provides a sound foundation for careers not only in science and engineering, but also finance, IT, law, software, medicine, the civil service and entrepreneurship.

Can I do A Level Physics without A Level Mathematics?

No. There is a lot of overlap between the two subjects, so students get more practice of the material and a wider range of examples where ideas apply. If you are an aspirational student, you should know that there is a clear correlation between higher grades and the amount of A Level Maths studied. On average, students studying Maths with Further Maths consistently gain higher grades in Physics than students studying Maths, and students who don't take A Level Maths have the lowest average Physics grades overall. It is not clear whether there is a causal link between these two variables!

POLITICS

Why study it?

Politics is a subject that facilitates critical thinking, analysis, evaluation and strong communication skills. The Russell Group's Informed Choices describes it as "hard." Therefore, it combines well with many other subjects from the 'social sciences' such as History, Economics, Law and Philosophy, which also require critical understanding and is something employers often value. It often has cachet, because of university subjects like PPE at Oxford and HSPS at Cambridge.

Do I need any prior knowledge? It is a completely new subject!

No. Everyone is in the same boat and that's what makes it fun. Nobody has an advantage over others, and it does mean that you can air your views and opinions in confidence.

Do I need to watch the news or keep up with current affairs?

Principally you do not need to do so but it helps so much. Politics is about studying the reasons behind the trends and patterns that form our decision making, voting and governmental actions, therefore it has a historical dimension. Knowledge of current affairs can be useful to show how these patterns adapt and change in differing contexts and shows off your understanding.



Is it popular? Will I be in very small classes?

Politics is very popular at St Albans School. It currently has four classes in the Lower Sixth and three in the Upper Sixth, with an average of about ten or eleven in a class. It has a team of five teachers, all very experienced and you will be taught by two different teachers in each year.

What does it involve?

In essence it is about power and how it is distributed amongst different, competing groups of people. Some people study it because they have an intrinsic fascination with current affairs, others because of the historical dimension it brings, some because of the mid-expanding, wider ranging views and human experiences that are studied and a few because we try to offer a trip to the USA every two years! In short you will find out a philosophy of how societies could be run (Ideologies) and be able to unpick why key decisions like the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump occurred and decide if they were fair or not (Politics of the UK & USA).

How is it taught?

It is taught through a mixture of discussion, debate and analysis of political material like documents and videos. All types of views are accepted and analysed critically. There is an emphasis on reading and the ability to write well. All examination questions are assessed through extended writing and essays.

SPANISH

Will I be fluent by the end of the course?

Each week you get a twenty-minute one-to-one session with our Language Assistant to practise speaking skills. Whilst you will not be fully fluent by the end, you will be able to initiate, hold and contribute to most conversations offering your own point of view.

What are the main differences between GCSE and A Level? Is there a big jump in difficulty?

At A Level there is much more focus on cultural awareness and on understanding current events in Spain and Latin America. You also study a play and a movie as part of the cultural awareness of the course. In terms of grammar, it does get more complex and you will be expected to have a good grounding in all regular verb endings and common irregular verbs across the main tenses before you begin.

Is there a study trip?

We will hopefully be planning an activities week in the south of Spain; a course fully delivered in Spanish.

For further information please contact the Admissions Department

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