

Didsbury High School



Year 9 Options Booklet (For study 2026-2028)

Message from the Head of School

Dear Parents and Carers,

This is a hugely important moment for our Year 9 students at Didsbury High School as they begin their transition into Key Stage 4. It is a stage that asks for curiosity, optimism and vitality, and one that marks the beginning of their journey towards GCSE success and the exciting choices that await them afterwards — whether that is continuing their studies in our Sixth Form or pursuing new opportunities elsewhere.

In recent years, our students have achieved exceptional GCSE outcomes, with **38% of all grades awarded at 7+ in 2025**. Alongside this, Didsbury High School has built a strong reputation as one of South Manchester's leading comprehensive schools. Our *Outstanding* Ofsted judgement in 2024 and recognition in the **Sunday Times Parent Power Guide 2026**, where we were named one of the top three mixed comprehensives in the North West, reflect the high standards and “pro-academic” ethos that shape daily life at DHS. More importantly, they underline what our young people can achieve when they work hard, show courage and develop the habits that help them flourish.

Success at Key Stage 4 is built on these habits. Alongside developing secure subject knowledge, students will need determination, resilience and self-control. They will be expected to communicate clearly, study independently, revise purposefully and meet deadlines confidently. These are qualities we nurture every day at DHS, and qualities that will help them not only gain excellent results but grow in character and ambition.

Choosing GCSE subjects is one of the first opportunities for students to show real courage. We will guide them with compassion and integrity, working closely with parents and carers to help each student make choices that suit their strengths, interests and future aspirations. This booklet will support you in understanding the structure of Key Stage 4, the requirements of each subject and the pathways that can open when students work hard, aim high, and show gratitude for the opportunities available to them.

All of us at DHS are excited to support our students as they take these next steps towards Key Stage 4 and, ultimately, towards success at the end of Year 11. Thank you, as always, for your continued support and partnership.

Ms Katie Houghton
Head of School



How many option subjects will be studied?

In Years 10 and 11, students will continue to study their core subjects — English, Maths and Science — alongside **three option subjects**.

They will also take part in our core Beliefs & Values programme and core PE. Both of these are compulsory, non-examined elements of the curriculum that support students' personal development, wellbeing and character education throughout Key Stage 4.

During the options process, each student will **select four preferred option subjects** for next year. These must be ranked in order of preference, as this information helps us build a timetable that provides the best possible combination for every student.

All students should pick **ONE** option from Pool A:

- GCSE History
- GCSE Geography
- BTEC Sport
- BTEC Health and Social Care

All students should pick a further **THREE** options from Pool B:

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|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • GCSE 3D Design | • GCSE Spanish | • GCSE Religious Studies |
| • GCSE Art and Design | • GCSE Geography | • GCSE Triple Sciences |
| • GCSE Computer Science | • GCSE History | |
| • GCSE Drama | • GCSE Latin | |
| • GCSE Food and Nutrition | • GCSE Media Studies | • BTEC Health and Social Care |
| • GCSE French | • GCSE Music | • BTEC Sport |
| | • GCSE Physical Education | |
| | • GCSE Photography | |

Students will eventually study **three** of the **four** option subjects they choose. We will always do our very best to ensure students receive their top three choices, with particular care taken around their *Pool A* preference. However, this cannot always be guaranteed, which is why it is important that students feel confident and positive about the prospect of studying **any** of the four subjects they submit.

Occasionally, an option may not run if too few students select it. If this happens, we will contact families directly and work closely with students and parents/carers to explore suitable alternatives.

There are also a small number of subject combinations that cannot be taken together because the qualifications overlap. These are explained clearly in the individual subject pages from page 10 onwards.

Before half-term, parents and carers will receive a separate letter explaining how to submit options choices, along with a digital copy of this booklet. Students and families will

also have access to a series of online subject videos, created by our subject leaders, which can be watched at home to help inform decision-making. These are available on our dedicated **Year 9 Options webpage**:

<https://www.didsburyhighschool.org.uk/year-9-options>

We want every student to have the very best information, advice and guidance. All Year 9 students will attend an assembly on **Thursday 26th February**, where we will outline the options process in more detail. Tutor time during the first three weeks after half-term will then focus on exploring subjects, offering one-to-one guidance and helping students reflect on their strengths, interests and future aspirations. Students will be able to begin making their choices from the date of the assembly.

Options will be submitted through the **MCAS App**, jointly by the student and their parent/carer. There is **no advantage** to submitting choices early, so please take time to talk through the options together and make thoughtful, considered decisions. If you need support, the Head of Year, House team, Student Support team and tutors are all here to help. Parents/carers without the **MCAS App** can contact reception for help activating their account (enquiries@didsburyhighschool.org.uk).

The deadline for submitting option choices is **Friday 20th March at 5:00pm**.

Summary of Key Dates

Thursday 13th February

- Parents/carers emailed a digital copy of the Options Booklet.

Week commencing Monday 16th February – Half-Term

- An opportunity for families to begin exploring the Options Booklet and online subject videos at home.

Week commencing Monday 23rd February

- **Year 9 Options Launch Assembly.**
- Tutor Time support programme begins.
- Individual guidance conversations arranged for all Year 9 students.
- Parents/carers emailed instructions on how to submit options.
- Options process opens on MCAS.

Thursday 5th March – Year 9 Parents' Evening

- A chance to discuss current attitudes, habits and progress with subject teachers, helping to inform final options choices.
- Parents/carers receive a physical copy of the Options Booklet.

Friday 20th March – 5:00pm

- Deadline for submitting initial options on MCAS.

Week commencing Monday 23rd March

- Pastoral teams review individual option choices.
- Further conversations with students and/or parents organised if needed.

Summer Term

- Whole-school timetabling and staffing completed.
- Final options confirmed with students and parents/carers.

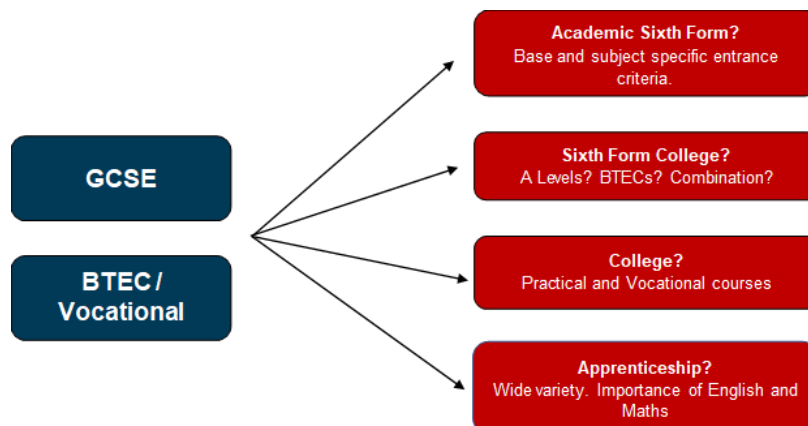
Autumn 2026

- Students begin GCSE study.
- Please note: once GCSE courses have begun, changes cannot be made.

What are the guiding principles for choosing your options?

1. Progression

When choosing their options, the most important principle for students to consider is 'progression'. Students should think carefully about where their subjects might lead — not only during their time at Didsbury High School, but also beyond it. These decisions are not just about the present; they help shape the future.



Whatever route a student eventually takes, it is important that their Key Stage 4 choices keep as many future doors open as possible. Every qualification offered at DHS provides pathways into a wide range of further study, training and career opportunities.

2. Breadth and rigour

Our aim at DHS is to ensure that every student finishes with the best set of qualifications they can. This means thinking carefully about **breadth** and **rigour**.

- **Breadth** means choosing a range of subjects that are not too similar, so that students keep their future choices wide and flexible. A well-balanced set of subjects helps students discover new strengths and ensures they do not narrow their options too early.
- **Rigour** means selecting qualifications that will challenge, stretch and inspire. Most students at DHS will finish Year 11 having studied a full suite of established facilitating subjects — **English, Maths, Science, a Language, and a Humanities subject** — because these provide a strong foundation for a wide number of future pathways.

By breadth, we mean choosing a range of subjects that are not too similar, so that students keep their future choices wide and flexible. A well balanced set of subjects helps students discover new strengths and ensures they do not narrow their options too early.

By rigour, we mean selecting qualifications that will challenge, stretch and inspire. Most students at DHS will finish Year 11 having studied a full suite of established facilitating subjects — English, Maths, Science, a Language, and a Humanities subject — because these provide a strong foundation for a wide number of future pathways.

3. What not to consider

Don't consider what your friends are doing; what's right for them may not be right for you and it's your future you need to be thinking about.

Don't choose subjects because you think they will be easier than others. All the subjects offered at Key Stage 4 have equivalence. There are no easy options at Key Stage 4.

What different types of qualification are available?

At Didsbury High School, students can choose from two types of qualification as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum: GCSEs and BTEC/Vocational qualifications. Both routes are highly respected by colleges, sixth forms and employers, and both can open a wide range of future pathways. Below is a summary of how each type works and the key differences between them.

GCSEs:

GCSE qualifications take a more 'traditional' approach to assessment, with all assessment taking the form of exams at the end Year 11. All of these exams are set externally by exam boards. GCSEs are more content driven than BTECs, with success relying upon a student's growing ability to recall and apply factual information and skills. Colleges and Sixth Forms do not always require GCSEs for further study, but more selective providers may prefer these qualifications to BTECs.



BTECs:

Both of our BTECs offered are Level 2 qualifications. This means that they are the equivalent to GCSEs and are fully recognised by post-16 education providers and employers.

The main differences between BTECs and GCSEs relate to the course content and assessment procedures. BTEC courses are assessed throughout the two-year course by a combination of exams and coursework. Much of that work may be more practically based and linked to real world scenarios.

Importantly, assessment is spread over the two-year course, so BTECs can often work well for some students who may struggle with all of the assessment coming at the end of Year 11.

BTECs provide progression onto Level 3 courses offered by post-16 education providers in the area. These Level 3 qualifications (post-16) attract UCAS points in the same way that their A Level equivalents do, enabling progression to university and further study

What are facilitating subjects?

Facilitating subjects are a group of academic subjects that help keep a wide range of future pathways open. They are valued by sixth forms, colleges, universities and employers because they develop strong literacy, numeracy, analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. At DHS, we encourage students to study a broad and rigorous combination of these subjects wherever appropriate.



The facilitating subjects include:

- English (Literature and Language)
- Mathematics
- Science (Core science, Separate sciences, Computer Science)
- Humanities (History, Geography, Religious Studies)
- Languages (Spanish, French, Latin)

Most students at DHS are already well placed to study a strong suite of facilitating subjects. They continue with compulsory English, Maths and Science, and many have already completed a Language GCSE in Year 9. Choosing either History or Geography alongside these provides an academically balanced foundation for future study.

Research from organisations such as the Sutton Trust and the UCL Institute of Education has consistently shown that studying a broad set of rigorous subjects helps expand future options, supports progression into further education and strengthens overall academic performance in English and Mathematics.

Facilitating subjects are also important for students who may be considering competitive universities in the future. These institutions often prefer or require high-grade A Levels in subjects such as:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Maths and Further Maths | • Languages (Classical and Modern) |
| • English Literature | • Economics |
| • Physics, Chemistry, Biology | • Computing |
| • History | |
| • Geography | |

If you think you may want to study any of these at A Level, it is wise to consider taking them at GCSE. Maths, English and Science are compulsory, and choosing additional facilitating subjects alongside them provides an excellent academic foundation.

FAQs

Who do I speak to if I have any questions?

Please direct any questions to options@didsburyhighschool.org.uk and we will respond as quickly as possible. Mr Spinks has overall responsibility for organising the Options process in school. Students can find him in school and can arrange to discuss their options during tutor time should they need further guidance and support.

What happens if there are insufficient numbers to make a course viable?

At times we have to make difficult choices around the economic viability of a course. We will contact you about this as soon as this becomes a possibility so that you can review the alternatives. We will withdraw a course when we are satisfied that we have exhausted what we see as the alternative curriculum options.

What happens if I pick subjects too similar in content?

Some combinations of subjects are not allowed. This is usually where the content and assessment procedure are too similar. This information is shown in the Options Booklet.

If this happens, we will guide you towards alternatives by meeting with you to discuss next steps.

What happens if I change my mind?

Simply, come and talk to us. Your first point of contact is Mr Spinks, whose office is on the third floor. We will always listen to you and try to find a solution.

When insufficient students select a subject, the course may be withdrawn. We will contact you about this as soon as this becomes a possibility so that you can review the alternatives.

Choices that were available at the outset may not be available later in the process.

What happens if the school can't make your options fit?

We will talk to you as soon as any issue crops up and discuss what is possible. It helps if you can be prepared to be a little flexible.

We will endeavour to create a timetable that allows students to study their preferred three subjects but this will not be possible in all cases. Where applicable, you will need to meet the entrance criteria for certain subjects.

Enrolment onto all subjects is subject to approval by both the relevant Head of Subject and the leadership team.

Core Subjects

GCSE English

Examination Board

AQA English Language
AQA English Literature

Examination Codes

- English Language 8700
- English Literature 8702

Form of Assessment – GCSE English Language

Module	Method of Assessment	Content
English Language Paper 1	Examination 1 hr 45 min	Unseen fiction text and creative writing.
English Language Paper 2	Examination 1 hr 45 min	Comparison of unseen non-fiction texts and transactional writing.

Course Content:

Students will be exposed to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts from a variety of different writers, genres and formats, and they will learn how to critically engage with writers' contexts, ideas, attitudes and methods. In so doing, students will hone their ability to craft their own narratives, descriptions, articles, letters, speeches and essays.

Form of Assessment – GCSE English Literature

Module	Method of Assessment	Content
English Literature Paper 1	Examination 1 hr 45 min	Shakespeare and the 19th Century Novel
English Literature Paper 2	Examination 2 hr 15 min	Modern prose/drama and poetry.

Course Content:

Students will study J B Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, 15 poems from the Power and Conflict cluster and a variety of unseen poetry from authors from different times and perspectives.

GCSE Maths

Examination Board and Syllabus

OCR Specification GCSE Mathematics (J560) is used. The class teacher will decide on the most appropriate tier of entry for your child.

Form of Assessment

No coursework requirement

Foundation Level: Grades 1 - 5

Higher Level: Grades 4 - 9

Students will sit three examinations to achieve a GCSE in Mathematics, one non-calculator paper and two calculator papers. Each paper is equally weighted and lasts 1 hour 30 minutes and will have a range of questions.

All examinations must be taken at the same tier and will take place at the end of Year 11.

Course Content

Students will be assessed on 3 key areas of Mathematics:

- AO1 Using and applying standard techniques
- AO2 Reasoning, interpreting and communicating mathematically
- AO3 Solving non-routine problems in mathematical and non-mathematical contexts

Skills and qualities required for success

- Rational thinking
- Appreciation of different methods and approaches
- Ability to solve problems in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- Ability to make links, find connections and generalise

Life After Laurus

Computer Games Developer, Furniture Designer, Actuary, Aerodynamicist, Avalanche Researcher are just some of the exciting and rewarding careers you could have if you go on to study Mathematics at college and university.

See www.mathscareers.org.uk for further information about opportunities Mathematics can offer.

Typically, a grade 7 at GCSE is required if students wish to study Mathematics at A Level at an alternative institution. A grade 8 is usually required if students wish to study Further Mathematics at A Level.

Most jobs and Sixth Form Colleges now require a minimum of a grade 5 GCSE for entry. However, increasingly places are asking for a grade 6.

GCSE Science

Examination Board and Syllabus

AQA Trilogy GCSE – Combined Science

Form of Assessment

2 x 1hr 15 minutes exams for Biology, Chemistry and Physics

100% exams-Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open response

Course Content

The specification is divided into topics which each cover different key areas of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Practical skills are developed throughout the course and assessed in the written papers.

Biology	Chemistry	Physics
1. Cell biology 2. Organisation 3. Infection and response 4. Bioenergetics	1. Atomic structure and the periodic table 2. Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter 3. Quantitative chemistry 4. Chemical changes 5. Energy changes	1. Energy 2. Electricity 3. Particle model of matter 4. Atomic structure
5. Homeostasis and response 6. Inheritance, variation and evolution 7. Ecology	6. The rate and extent of chemical change 7. Organic chemistry 8. Chemical analysis 9. Chemistry of the atmosphere 10. Using resources	5. Forces 6. Waves 7. Magnetism and electromagnetism

Skills and qualities required for success

Since it is a requirement of the National Curriculum that all students study Science, this course encourages students to be inspired, motivated and challenged by following a broad, coherent, practical, satisfying and worthwhile course of study.

It encourages learners to develop their curiosity about the living, material and physical worlds and provides insight into and experience of how Science works.

It enables learners to engage with Science and to make informed decisions about further study in Science and related disciplines, and career choices.

Life After Laurus

This course provides a good route to AS and A2 Levels in a broad range of subjects.

(Non-examined) P.E.

Every child will continue with their PE lessons throughout KS4 where we expect students to further develop their knowledge and skills from Key Stage 3. Students will cover a variety of physical activities, including football, rugby, netball, table tennis, basketball, trampolining, rounders/softball, cricket, athletics and fitness.

During Year 10, students who choose to complete the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award will spend one term completing relevant training in preparation for the day walks and expeditions.

At KS4 we also aim to encourage our students to adopt an active and healthy lifestyle. This is promoted in lessons and then through our elective provision.

(Non-examined) Beliefs and Values

Students continue to study Beliefs and Values, including Citizenship, into KS4.

The curriculum enables them to meet the requirements of the Relationships, Sex and Health Education Statutory Guidance (DfE) and therefore helps them to be prepared for Life after Laurus.

They also cover topics such as test anxiety and mental health, so that they are supported through their exams. Our curriculum is responsive and meets the needs of the students; we work closely with the students, pastoral team and external agencies. The Beliefs and Values curriculum is augmented by work undertaken in form time and assemblies.

Throughout the two years in Beliefs and Values, students will alternate between topics surrounding Health and Wellbeing, Living in the Wider World, and Relationships. This is to ensure our students learn both the knowledge and skills that they need to thrive in the 21st Century.

Beliefs and Values encourage:

- Open mindedness
- Respect and tolerance
- Analytical skills
- A global perspective (an interest in the world around us)
- Self-confidence and self-respect

Options Subjects

GCSE Art and Design

(cannot be combined with Photography)
(cannot be combined with 3D Design)

Examination Board

AQA (Art, Craft and Design)

Form of Assessment

Component 1: Portfolio (coursework)	60%
Component 2: Externally Set Assignment:	40%

Course Content

The course is divided into two main parts: **Portfolio** and **Externally Set Assignment**. Both aspects must satisfy the following assessment objectives:

1. Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.
2. Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.
3. Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.
Written annotation is an integral aspect of the creative process.
4. Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.

Students are expected to show evidence of written annotation and drawing in both Component 1 and Component 2.

Portfolio (60%)

Throughout Year 10 and 11, students work on a series of projects. Near the end of the course students are required to select and submit from this a **Portfolio**. This must consist of a sustained project (including preparatory work, development of ideas and processes, and final pieces) and a selection of further work. Students will have the opportunity to produce work from a variety of starting points. They will investigate the work of Artists and Designers as well as art from different times and cultures. As the course is a general Art, Craft and Design course, candidates must show evidence of working in at least two of the following areas:

- Fine Art (drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, photography)
- Graphic Communication (ICT, illustration, typography, package design)
- Textile Design (art textiles, embroidery, paper-making, printmaking)
- Three Dimensional Design (ceramics, sculpture, jewellery architectural design).
- Photography (experimental imagery, location)

Externally Set Assignment (40%)

Towards the end of the course students are given an **Externally Set Assignment**. Here they receive an AQA paper containing a range of starting points from which they must select one and independently produce a unit of work. During this time they are given general guidance on how to work through this task. They have approximately seven

weeks to develop supporting preparation work before they sit a ten-hour practical session, which is split over two days, to create a final piece(s).

The preparatory work is marked alongside the final piece(s) and together with the externally set assignment, contributes 40% towards the final GCSE grade.

Skills and attitudes required for success

This course offers students the opportunity to produce work in a wide range of materials, to build up technical skills and to express their feelings and creative ideas in both two and three dimensions.

This course is aimed at enthusiastic students with an adventurous and enquiring approach to art and design, who wish to learn new skills as well as develop those acquired at Key Stage 3. It is best suited for those who have a particular interest or ability in art and design and wish to improve their creative thinking and problem-solving skills further. Students will need to take the initiative in decision making and be able to research projects in their own time, so a firm sense of commitment to the subject is essential, whilst also being highly self-motivated.

Students must also be prepared to attend lunch and twilight sessions.

Life After Laurus

The career opportunities available in the Art World are vast and diverse as are the routes which students who wish to pursue their art and design education can take; from AS/A2 Levels, to BTEC National courses specialising in specific areas such as 3D Design, Fashion and Clothing and Photography.

Courses such as these can then lead on to Higher Education courses and careers in Architecture, Fine Art, Animation and Illustration, Media, Jewellery Design, Fashion, Education, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Set/Stage Design, Furniture Design and Film to name but a few.

Alternatively, if a student would rather enter the work place post 16, then there are many careers in the creative industries that would welcome a GCSE in Art and Design, some of which provide further learning opportunities within them, for example a Modern Apprenticeship.

Additional Requirements

Students who wish to select this course must demonstrate strong competence and a consistent work ethic in KS3 Art and Design, and a teacher recommendation may be required.

Students will also be required to purchase materials to support their studies*. These will be supplied by the school at a reasonable price. If you have any concerns about costs of materials, please contact the school for details of any support available. Please note that financial assistance is available for this, if required.

GCSE Computer Science

Examination Board and Code

OCR – J277

Form of Assessment

Unit 01: Computer systems – External Exam (50%)

Unit 02: Computational thinking, algorithms and programming - External Exam (50%)

Course Content

The subject content for this qualification consists of the following areas of study:

- Understanding of what algorithms are, what they are used for and how they work; ability to interpret, amend and create algorithms.
- Understanding of binary representation, data representation, data storage and compression, encryption and databases; ability to use SQL to insert, amend and extract data stored in a structured database.
- Understanding of components of computer systems; ability to construct truth tables, produce logic statements and read and interpret fragments of assembly code.
- Understanding of how computer networks, the internet and the World Wide Web work.
- Understanding of threats that networks face and methods of cyber security.
- Awareness of emerging trends in computing technologies, the impact of computing on individuals, society and the environment, including ethical, legal and ownership issues.
- Understand the need to decompose problems into sub-problems.
- Ability to create original algorithms or work with algorithms produced by others.
- Ability to design, write, test and evaluate programs.

GCSE COMPUTER SCIENCE allows students, not only the opportunity of developing their knowledge and understanding of programming, but also the underlying principles of logic, decomposition, algorithms, data representation and communication. The subject also develops a student's understanding of current affairs in the subject, as well as the history of computing that has led us to the technological world as we know it.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success:

- Keen interest in Computer Science
- Keen to develop computational thinking skills and be able to apply these skills to solve real problems and produce robust programs
- Enjoying working independently, finding out your own answers – not just being taught
- Ability to complete work by the deadlines set
- Keen interest in keeping up to date with ever changing technology and procedures

Life After Laurus

In a subject where technology is ever changing, students can open up their options in Cloud Services, Web Development, Programming and Cyber Security to name a few. The exciting aspect of this course means there are many jobs that are not yet known, but will be available as the industry continues to grow at such rapid speed. The nature of the subject means that a deep understanding of such concepts is what many employers are looking for, as they look for new ideas rooted in exceptional knowledge. The sector also has one of the best entry level salaries which can grow exponentially as your experience develops.

Additional Requirements

Throughout the GCSE Computer Science course, you will need to show a keen interest in keeping up-to-date with emerging technologies and to meet career challenges in the future, it is important that you are self-reliant as well as good communicators and problem solvers. The programming aspect requires resolve, patience, and critical thinking. These skills take time to develop, and you should consider whether these are skills you would like to develop throughout the duration of the course.

Given the content of the program, a further consultation with the Head of Department may be appropriate before a student is accepted onto the course.

GCSE 3D Design

(cannot be combined with GCSE Art and Design)
(cannot be combined with GCSE Photography)

Examination Board

AQA - Three-Dimensional Design (Product design and architectural design).

Form of Assessment

Component 1: Portfolio (coursework)	60%
Component 2: Externally Set Assignment:	40%

Course Content

The course is divided into two main parts: **Portfolio** and **Externally Set Assignment**. Both aspects must satisfy the following assessment objectives:

5. Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.
6. Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.
7. Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.
Written annotation is an integral aspect of the creative process.
8. Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.

Students are expected to show evidence of written annotation and drawing in both Component 1 and Component 2.

Portfolio (60%)

Throughout Year 10 and 11, students work on a series of projects. Near the end of the course students are required to select and submit from this a **Portfolio**. This must consist of a sustained project (including preparatory work, development of ideas and processes, and final pieces) and a selection of further work. Students will have the opportunity to produce work from a variety of starting points. They will investigate the work of designers as well as design from different times, movements and cultures.

Externally Set Assignment (40%)

Towards the end of the course students are given an **Externally Set Assignment**. Here they receive an AQA paper containing a range of starting points from which they must select one and independently produce a unit of work. During this time, they are given general guidance on how to work through this task. They have approximately seven weeks to develop supporting preparation work before they sit a ten-hour practical session, **which is split over multiple days**, to create a final piece(s).

The preparatory work is marked alongside the final piece(s) and together with the externally set assignment, contributes 40% towards the final GCSE grade.

Skills and attitudes required for success

Throughout the course you will explore design opportunities through prototyping and modelling by making functional and aesthetic products. You will use intellectual, creative and practical skills to develop and effectively communicate your design ideas. You will develop your decision-making skills and the ability to critique and refine your ideas throughout the design process. You will also explore and gain an understanding of materials (timbers, polymers, paper and board), different components, technologies and practical processes and will learn how to use these safely.

Students will be expected to have a genuine interest in the subject, a willingness to listen carefully to advice and absorb ideas from their research.

This course is aimed at students who are creative thinkers and problem solvers with an adventurous and enquiring approach to design. It is for students who wish to learn new skills as well as develop those skills acquired at Key Stage 3 in CAD/CAM. Students will need to take the initiative in decision making and be able to research designers to influence decision making.

Life After Laurus

The career opportunities available in the Design World are vast and diverse as are the routes which students who wish to pursue their art and design education can take; from AS/A2 Levels, to BTEC National courses.

Courses such as these can then lead on to Higher Education courses and careers in a wide variety of work within the design industry, including: Product Designer, CAD Artist, Furniture Designer, Graphic Designer, Interior Designer, Architect, Automotive Designer, Packaging Designer, Advertising, Marketing, Digital media, Games Designer, Education, Set/Stage design to name but a few.

Alternatively, if a student would rather enter the work place post-16, then there are many careers in the creative industries that would welcome a GCSE in 3Dimensional Design, some of which provide further learning opportunities within them, for example a Modern Apprenticeship.

Additional Requirements

Students will be required to purchase the following materials to support their studies*:

- A design folder, which is supplied by the school for a very reasonable cost
- A good quality eraser, pencil sharpener, pencils, biro and fine-liners
- There may be additional material costs required throughout the course if required by the students

*Please note that financial assistance is available for this, if required

Examination Board and Syllabus

Edexcel 1 DRO

Form of Assessment

Component 1: Devising (40% of the qualification). Coursework: a portfolio covering the creating and developing process and analysis and evaluation of this process (45 marks). Practical assessment: a devised performance (15 marks) teacher assessed, externally moderated.

Component 2: Performance from Text (20% of the qualification). Students perform in two key extracts from a performance text (48 marks). Externally assessed by a visiting examiner.

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice (40% of the qualification). 1 hour 45-minute written examination. Practical exploration and study of one complete text (45 marks) and one live theatre production (15 marks). Externally assessed and moderated.

Course Content

Term 1: Introduction to and practical and written exploration of the set text 'DNA' by Dennis Kelly. Revising dramatic conventions, techniques and styles to prepare for the mock devising assessment.

Term 2: Observation of a live theatre production with exploration of analysis and evaluation of this performance. Preparation for practical examination combined with taking of written notes of the creative process to support with the coursework portfolio.

Term 3: Completion of written coursework portfolio. Preparation of set text 'DNA' by Dennis Kelly for a showcase performance to a visiting audience.

Term 4: Preparation for the Performance from Text examination. Written exam practice continues throughout the term with a new live performance being viewed before the Christmas break.

Term 5: Performance from Text examination takes place. Written exam practice continues throughout the term.

Term 6: Theatre Makers in Practice examination.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

- Ability to analyse, justify and evaluate in detailed written responses.
- Effective social skills and a willingness to mix with groups of people.
- Commitment to rehearse outside of lesson time when working on a group task.
- Courage to try out new drama exercises in groups.
- Ability to articulate ideas in voice and movement skills.
- Desire to direct and encourage others to problem solve using drama strategies and conventions.
- Confidence to perform work to others and in front of a live audience.
- The ability to give and receive positive and constructive feedback.
- Imagination to record drama work in written and diagrammatic form.
- The social intelligence to listen and focus attention on others.
- Ability to create imaginative drama without a given script.

Life After Laurus

Caring Professions; teaching, law, medicine, the emergency services, social services, therapy, welfare, youth and community work.

Creative Industries; acting, presenting, design technicians (lighting, sound, costume and set), art administration, advertising, marketing and branding, creative media, architecture, computer games designer, tourism, events management, creative management, media and journalism, personnel, retail management.

Additional Requirements

Students should have demonstrated a clear interest in the subject to manage this demanding course. Students must also be prepared to engage with the demanding theory and written side to the course. This will include analysing and evaluating live performance, as well as writing at length in the perspective of a performer, designer and a director. Additionally, students must be willing to write in detail about their drama work on a regular basis in preparation for their controlled assessments.

As part of this course students are expected to attend the arranged theatre visits which form part of their coursework. Therefore, there will be a small cost involved to cover the payment of tickets and transport.

There is an expectation that all GCSE Drama students are part of or support extra-curricular events within the Performing Arts faculty.

GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition

Examination Board and Syllabus

WJEC (Eduqas) C560

Form of Assessment:

Component 1: Principles of Food Preparation and Nutrition

Written examination: 1 hour 45 minutes. 50% of final GCSE qualification.

This component will consist of two sections both containing compulsory questions and will assess the six areas of content as listed in the specified GCSE content.

Section A: Question based on stimulus material.

Section B: Structured, short and extended response questions to assess content related to Food Preparation and Nutrition.

Component 2: Food Preparation and Nutrition in Action

Non-examination assessment (NEA): internally assessed, externally moderated. Both completed in Year 11. Component 2 is 50% of the GCSE qualification.

NEA 1 Food Investigation Assessment: A scientific food investigation which will assess the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to scientific principles underlying the preparation and cooking of food. A report of 1500- 2000 words will be produced. 15% of GCSE mark.

NEA 2 Food Preparation Assessment: Prepare, cook and present a menu which assesses the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the planning, preparation, cooking and presentation of food. A report will be produced of 15 sides of A4 to include all text, photos, charts and graphs. 35% of GCSE mark.

Course Content

This exciting course will equip learners with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to cook and to apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating.

Through this qualification learners are encouraged to cook and practice making informed decisions about food and nutrition in order to be able to feed themselves and others affordably and nutritiously, now and later in life. It will allow the students to understand the huge challenges that we face globally to supply the world with nutritious and safe food.

Areas of study:

1. Food commodities
2. Principles of nutrition
3. Diet and good health

4. The science of food
5. Food provenance
6. Food spoilage
7. Cooking and food preparation

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

- Well-developed practical skills and a keen interest for food preparation
- Clear understanding of fundamental nutrition from Key Stage 3 Food and Nutrition lessons
- Independence and capability of writing up assignments
- Drive and self-motivation needed during independent research
- Ability to work as part of a kitchen team

Life After Laurus

Successful completion of this qualification will allow access to the following further education and career pathways:

- **Post 16 study of the following courses:** Level 3 Certificate in Food Science and Nutrition, Biology A-Level, Chemistry A-Level, Business A-Level, Level 2 NVQ Culinary Skills, Level 2 NVQ Food Production and Cookery, Level 2 NVQ Professional Cookery.
- **Further education courses:** Food Science and Nutrition BSc, Sports Science BSc, Nutritional Science BSc, Biochemistry BSc, Culinary Industry Management BBa, Medicine MBChB, Dietetics MSc.
- **Potential careers:** Food Scientist, Nutritionist, Nutritional Therapist, Dietitian, Nurse, Doctor, Teacher, Product Developer, Animal Nutritionist, Sport Scientist, Chef, Home Economist, Recipe Developer, Food Writer.

Additional Requirements

- Dedication, self-motivation and a genuine interest in nutrition, health and food science
- Enjoyment of food preparation and experimenting with food ingredients
- A proven competency and work ethic in KS3 Food Preparation & Nutrition
- Excellent organisation and record of bringing required equipment into school throughout KS3

Recommended websites and revision guides

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zdn9jhv>

Eduqas GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition: Revision Guide. Jayne Hill

Eduqas GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition: Practice Tests. Jayne Hill

The science of cooking- Every Question Answered to Perfect your Cooking. Dr Stuart Farrimond.

GCSE French

Examination Board and Syllabus

AQA GCSE French (8562)

Forms of Assessment

All GCSE language courses are now linear, which means that you will be assessed on all four skills at the end of the course. There is a Higher and Foundation option for:

- Listening (25%) – you will need to demonstrate that you can understand and respond to different types of spoken language.
- Reading (25%) – you will need to demonstrate that you can understand and respond to different types of written language.
- Speaking (25%) – you will need to communicate and interact effectively in speech for a variety of purposes.
- Writing (25%) – you will need to communicate effectively in writing for a variety of purposes.

You are already very familiar with how to learn another language – how to listen and speak, understand grammar, write and translate, and these are all skills you can transfer to another GCSE Language. That's why, **in the Laurus Trust, the majority of students who take a second GCSE language do just as well or even better than they did in their first one.** You will have met similar topics before in your Spanish GCSE, so you will be well equipped and prepared for the format of the French GCSE.

*Please note that there are some small changes in specification from the Spanish exam that you will have completed in 2025. These are mainly:

- Less vocabulary to learn
- Dictation in the listening exam
- Reading a text aloud in the speaking exam

Course Content

The topic areas that are covered in the four parts of the examination are:

- **Identity and Culture:** e.g. technology, social media, relationships, customs and festivals.
- **Local, national, international and global areas of interest:** e.g. voluntary work, the environment and tourism.
- **Current and future study and employment:** e.g. career choices, life at college and ambitions.

The content will teach you all about French culture, customs and traditions in both France and in the French speaking world, and of course, French food and fashion.

Life After Laurus

Students who are hoping to pursue a university or professional career will particularly benefit from pursuing an additional language. **Speaking multiple languages really stands out.** Universities know that languages are demanding, academic subjects that improve your ability to speak and write in English. They deepen your knowledge of the English language and etymology. They help you recognise patterns and crack codes more quickly than others. Having extra GCSE languages can therefore mark you out as particularly talented, whatever course you may be applying for.

Being multilingual can create opportunities to travel, study or live and work abroad. **Language skills can be transferred to all types of work, and employers will be looking for these key skills.** As a scientist, you may want to collaborate with Universities around the world; as a journalist, you might want to interview people in different countries; or as an engineer, you might get the chance to work on a major international project. Whatever job you are applying for, speaking multiple languages could put you ahead of all the other candidates. **Whatever you want to do in life, knowing more languages will grant you more opportunities.**

However, it is not all about jobs and courses. Some of the biggest social problems we face today come from a lack of understanding and respect between people from different parts of the world. Learning languages helps you to understand people from other cultures, and to make yourself understood to them too – so, by learning more of them, you could become part of the force that solves these problems for good.

GCSE Geography

Examination Board and Syllabus.

AQA GCSE Geography (8035)

Assessment.

Paper 1 (35%) Living with the Physical Environment

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes

Paper 2 (35%) Challenges in the Human Environment

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes

Paper 3 (30%) Geographical Applications

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes

Course Content

Paper 1 – Living with the Physical Environment:

Section A

- Natural Hazards
- Tectonic Hazards
- Weather Hazards
- Climate Change

Section B

- Ecosystems
- Tropical Rainforests
- One from - *Hot Deserts or Cold Environments*

Section C

- UK Physical Landscapes
- Two from - *Coastal Landscapes in the UK or River Landscapes in the UK or Glacial Landscapes in the UK*

Paper 2 – Challenges in the human environment:

Section A

- Urban Issues and Challenges

Section B

- The Changing Economic World

Section C

- Resource Management
- One from – *Food or Water or Energy*

Paper 3 - Geographical Applications:

This paper is designed to be synoptic in that students will be required to draw together knowledge, understanding and skills from Papers 1 and 2.

- Section A - Issue Evaluation
- Section B - Fieldwork

Skills and Qualities Required for Success:

Geographers can:

- Make a concise report
- Handle data
- Ask questions and find the answers
- Make decisions about an issue
- Analyse material
- Manage themselves
- Solve problems
- Think independently

Geographers are:

- Good communicators
- Spatially aware
- Socially and environmentally aware
- Problem solvers
- Good team players
- Computer literate
- Well rounded, flexible thinkers

Life After Laurus

Post 16 AS/A2 Level

Geography, Geology, Sociology and Environmental Science.

Career Pathways

Urban/Rural Planning; Environmental Consultancy; Hazard/Emergency Management; Community Development; Climatologist; Oceanography; Teaching; Architecture; Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Additional Requirements

An enthusiasm for Geography; an inquisitive approach to the world around you; and a desire to find out how the world is going to change in the future.

There is a Mathematical aspect to the course as students are expected to develop and demonstrate a number of geographical skills, including numerical and graphical skills. Students also need to use and analyse different types of data.

GCSE History

Examination Board and Syllabus: AQA

Form of Assessment

At GCSE there are two exams completed at the end of Year 11 – Paper 1 and 2 are each worth 50% and last for 2 hours minutes each. These exams consist of short answer questions and longer, essay type questions.

Course Content: *Why study History?*

We all live in a volatile, dynamic and interconnected world. Knowledge of the past is essential in understanding and trying to make sense of what's happening now. GCSE History helps us to do both, through studying key events and individuals from the past and the ways in which they have shaped our present.

What topics will we study?

Paper 1

Section A: Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and Dictatorship

This period study offers a fascinating exploration of a pivotal era. From the rise of the German Empire to the complexities of the Weimar Republic and the gripping events of World War II, this course provides a rich tapestry of political, social, and cultural developments. Studying Hitler's regime and the Nazi era encourages critical thinking and a nuanced understanding of the consequences of totalitarianism. Engaging with primary sources and historical debates, students gain valuable insights into this transformative period, fostering an appreciation for its lasting impact on the world.

- Germany and the Growth of Democracy
- Germany and the Depression
- The Experiences of Germans under the Nazis

Section B: Conflict and tension: the inter-war years, 1918-1939

This wider world depth study delves into the aftermath of World War I, exploring the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles. Investigating the League's attempts at maintaining global peace and the Treaty's impact on international relations, students will unravel the intricate diplomatic landscape of the interwar period. From the Roaring Twenties' optimism to the tensions leading to World War II, this course offers a captivating journey into the political complexities that shaped the era. The course provides a fascinating exploration of cartoon sources, fostering critical thinking about the factors that influenced a world on the brink of upheaval.

- Peacemaking
- The League of Nations and International Peace
- The Origins and Outbreak of the Second World War

Paper 2

Section A: Britain: Migration, empires and the people: c790 to the present day

This thematic study opens a compelling window into the global movements of people and their profound impact on societies. From the first Viking invasion in c790, the American wars of independence and the 2016 European referendum, the course will delve into the dynamics that have shaped human history. From the push and pull factors influencing migration to the cultural exchanges and challenges faced by migrants, students will gain a nuanced understanding of the topic. Engaging with case studies and contemporary

issues, such as the refugee crisis, fosters empathy and a broader perspective on the interconnectedness of the world. The course encourages critical thinking by analysing the economic, social, and political dimensions of migration, equipping students with valuable insights into the contemporary challenges and opportunities presented by global movement.

- Conquered and Conquerors
- Looking West
- Expansion and Empire
- Britain in the 20th Century

Section B: Elizabethan England, c1568–1603

This British Depth Study provides an intriguing journey into one of the most captivating stories in history. Exploring the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the course unravels the political intrigues, cultural blossoming, and social transformations of the Elizabethan era. From the defeat of the Spanish Armada to ruthless assassination plots, students will discover the dynamic forces that shaped this remarkable queen and unveil how she cleverly navigated a male-dominated world through her politics and leadership.

- Elizabeth's Court and Parliament
- Life in Elizabethan times
- Troubles at home and abroad
- The historic environment of Elizabethan England

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

- A sound level of literacy is vital given the dependence upon written communication in the assessment of the course
- Our KS3 History has been deliberately challenging - if you have been getting 3s or above for your knowledge and skills in History, you are in a good position to succeed
- The ability to write strong analytical paragraphs is the building block for success
- Continued commitment to developing as a historian by working hard outside of lessons with the revision resources we will provide

Life After Laurus

Apart from studying a wide range of exciting historic periods, you'll learn a range of handy skills that will help you with A-levels and future work. These include:

- excellent communication and writing skills
- how to construct an argument
- research and problem skills
- investigation and problem-solving skills
- analytical and interpretation skills.

History is a universal qualification which increases the prospects of any students. The course is highly respected throughout colleges and higher education establishments. GCSE History is valued for any post-16 course.

Employers are always looking for young people who are able to think critically and analytically, both key attributes of the historian, and studying GCSE History can help you take the first steps on a variety of exciting career paths, including: Law, Journalism, Business, Politics, Civil Service, Human Resources, Marketing and Management.

Additional Requirements

Students would need to have demonstrated a commitment to their studies throughout the course of Year 9 History. History students require good literacy skills to make progress in this subject.

GCSE Latin

Examination Board and Syllabus

WJEC Eduqas GCSE Latin – Route B

Forms of Assessment

Three exams: Latin Language (50%); Latin Literature (30%); Roman Civilisation (20%).

Course Content

Despite the name, this isn't just a course in Latin. GCSE Latin is an introduction to the world of Classics – the study of the ancients who lived over two thousand years ago. By taking this course, you will not only learn how to understand the language of the Ancient Romans, but you'll also learn about how they lived, understand their culture, and read their stories in the original language. So, in order to do well at GCSE Latin, you'll need to have a keen interest in both languages and history.

The GCSE Latin course is made up of three parts:

- **Latin Language**, worth 50% of your grade. We'll learn how to decipher stories written in Latin, unpicking the complex, puzzle-like grammar of this ancient language to uncover the hidden meanings. Your existing knowledge of Spanish or French vocabulary and grammar, as well as your knowledge of English, will really help you here!
- **Latin Literature**, worth 30% of your grade. We'll look at some real Ancient Roman literature and explore not only what the authors tell us openly, but also what they are saying between the lines. These will include stories about love and marriage including Ovid's advice for rejected lovers and Seneca's exploration of moral decline in Roman society.
- **Roman Civilisation**, worth 20% of your grade. We'll learn about Roman family life; education, marriage, divorce, birth, death and household gods. We'll look at images and art as well as written sources.

Life After Laurus

Latin will give you skills that will help you in many different careers. Firstly, **your writing will be greatly improved in English**, since you'll end up with a remarkable vocabulary, knowledge of where words come from, and a deeper understanding of how sentences are formed. This will be a boost to your application, whatever you want to do.

But that's not all. Want to study English? You'll gain some impressive knowledge of Classical literature and its famous authors, and how to understand them. Want to be a doctor, scientist or lawyer? You'll have a head start, since all of these professions use Latin terminology. Want to be a computer scientist? Learning Latin grammar teaches you to understand complex rules and decode algorithms, just like a programmer. All of these professions, and many more, understand the benefits of having GCSE Latin on your CV.

Students who are hoping to go on to study at university will benefit particularly from GCSE Latin. Universities often look for something unique that you can offer, and Latin certainly fits that bill. Latin is often thought to be an extremely challenging and academic subject, and not many students get the chance to study it – so having a GCSE in Latin will mark you out as a really outstanding candidate, whatever course you're applying for.

GCSE Media Studies

Examination Board and Syllabus:

Eduqas

Form of Assessment:

The course is assessed with two exams (70%) and a non-exam assessment (30%).

Course Content

Component 1: Exploring the Media (40%)

Critical exploration into a range of media forms and products (newspapers, advertising and marketing, film and video games, radio) covering all aspects of the theoretical framework: media language, contexts, industries, audiences and representation.

Component 2: Understanding Media Forms and Products (30%)

In-depth study of particular media forms through two set study areas (television and music). The theoretical framework is applied in further depth through detailed study of a specific television genre, two contemporary music videos (including the online, social and participatory media surrounding the artists), and one music video from the past.

Component 3: Creating Media Products (30%)

You will create an individual media production for an intended audience, applying your knowledge and understanding of media language and representation. Although the genre/style and audience for the set production briefs change every year, the briefs take the following form:

TV: Create a sequence from a new TV programme **or** a website to promote a new TV programme.

Advertising and Marketing – Music: Create a music video **or** a website to promote a new artist / band.

Advertising and Marketing – Film: – Print-based marketing material for a new film.

Magazines: Create a new print **or** online magazine.

In this subject, you will study a wide range of media forms and products, some of which you may already have some knowledge of. You will look at industries such as television, film and music, and acquire the relevant media language associated with these areas.

You will learn how to analyse and interpret various media texts, products and forms, with consideration of the contexts of media and their influences.

You will also have the exciting opportunity to develop your practical skills using a range of contemporary equipment and software to produce your own media production. As part of your study, you will have access to Digital SLR cameras for both photography and filming and the computer suite to develop your media editing and processing skills. You will be taught to manipulate and edit photographs using *Photoshop*, and have access to the rest of *Adobe Suite* to edit other media products like a professional in creative industries.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

Most importantly, you need to have a keen interest in the media, be that film, music, the internet or photography to name but a few. You need to be keen to develop your interest and enjoyment of media communication in local and global contexts.

You need to be willing to form your own opinions and become a critical reader of the media by investigating and researching topics independently.

Independent effort is of the utmost importance, especially when producing your own media product. The ability to manage your own time and work to deadlines in this subject is a must, just as it is in the media industry. Good teamwork skills are also essential as you will work with others when creating your own media productions.

Life After Laurus

GCSE Media Studies provides the foundations for study of the subject and so can lead onto A-Level Media Studies and BTEC Level 3 Media courses. The ability to analyse critically, understand the contextual influences upon Media and create your own media productions will benefit you in many subjects. Media Studies complements other creative subjects as well as subjects in the humanities and the social sciences, such as sociology.

Possible routes into employment may involve roles in the creative media industry such as filming, radio broadcasting, production roles, advertising, photography, game design, or one of the many other roles that involve interacting with others and using new media technologies.

Exam Board & Code: Edexcel, 1MU0

Form of Assessment - Exams and coursework

Component 1: Performing Music - 30%

- Performance 1: Solo Performance
- Performance 2: Ensemble (group) Performance

Component 2: Composing Music - 30%

- Composition 1: Composition to a brief
- Composition 2: Free composition (students choose their own style and instrumentation)

Component 3: Appraising - 40% (Written exam - 1 hour 45 mins)

- Critically listening to, analysing and answering questions about musical extracts (8 set works and unfamiliar music).

Course content

Performing, composing and listening skills are integrated throughout the course in order to develop you as a musician. You will develop your knowledge and appreciation of music through these four areas of study:

- Instrumental Music 1700-1820
- Vocal Music
- Music for Stage and Screen
- Fusions

There are numerous performance opportunities throughout the course for you to perform as a soloist and as part of a group. It is important that you engage with a range of live music. There will be trips throughout the course to watch live music as well as masterclasses with professional musicians to develop and hone your skills.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

Students must play a musical instrument (this includes the voice) that can be used for performances in both solo and ensemble performances.

A genuine passion for this subject is essential. This course is an opportunity to take creative risks, experience on-stage performances and explore independent thinking and group work in a close-knit setting.

Life After Laurus

This GCSE Music course provides a solid foundation for AS and A Level as well as preparation for a music related career. Even if music is not a career path, universities prefer students who are well rounded and have skills outside of the chosen subject – GCSE Music demonstrates this well. Aside from this, GCSE Music equips students with

the skills that are preferable to employers such as teamwork, communication, presenting skills, confidence, perseverance and problem solving.

Further relevant information

Attendance at one extra-curricular activity during the course (per week) is compulsory as this supports performance and musical growth.

In order to succeed at GCSE Music, you must be having weekly lessons on your instrument or voice and practise regularly. In some cases, school can offer financial support to those struggling to fund instrumental lessons, depending on whether you are eligible.

GCSE Photography

(cannot be combined with Art and Design or 3D Design)

Examination Board and Code

AQA 8206

Form of Assessment

Component 1: Portfolio (coursework): 60%

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment: 40%

Course Content

The course is divided into two main parts: **Portfolio** and **Externally Set Assignment**. Both aspects must satisfy the following assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources: this is the work of artists, photographers and other sources.
- Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses. Written annotation is an integral aspect of the creative process.
- Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.

Students are expected show evidence of written annotation and drawing in both Component 1 and Component 2.

Portfolio (60%): Throughout Year 10 and 11, students work on two projects which are both submitted as Component 1, the Portfolio. This must consist of a sustained project (including preparatory work, development of ideas and processes and final pieces) which will be started in the second half of Year 10 and the first project which starts in September of Year 10.

Students will have the opportunity to produce work from a variety of starting points for the second main project. They will investigate the work of photographers and fine artists as well as art and photography from different times and cultures. Students will explore a range of techniques and processes including both traditional and new technologies. The course will predominately focus on digital lens-based media where students will explore ICT when manipulating and developing their photographs with the use of Adobe Photoshop. As well as working digitally, students are required to evidence drawing skills, this may include light drawing, composition designs and physically or digitally manipulating images.

Externally Set Assignment (40%): In January of Year 11 students are given an **Externally Set Assignment**. Here they receive an AQA paper containing a range of starting points from which they must select one and independently produce a unit of work. During this time, they are given general guidance on how to work through this task. They have approximately nine weeks to develop supporting preparation work before they sit a ten-hour practical session (split over two days) to create a final piece(s). Students may take all photographs prior to the practical session to allow time during the session to manipulate their photographs and produce a final piece(s).

The preparatory work is marked alongside the final piece(s) and contributes 40% towards the final GCSE grade.

Skills and qualities required for success

This course offers students the opportunity to explore the technical and creative aspects of Photography. They will explore the digital camera and develop skills in a range of techniques and processes. Creativity will be encouraged throughout the course and students will be encouraged to work collaboratively as well as alone to create a range of innovative pieces.

This course is aimed at enthusiastic students with an adventurous and enquiring approach to art and design, who wish to learn new skills as well as develop those acquired at Key Stage 3. It is best suited for those who have a particular interest or ability in art and design and/or photography and wish to improve their creative thinking and problem-solving skills further. Students will need to take the initiative in decision making and be able to research projects in their own time, so a firm sense of commitment to the subject is essential, whilst also being highly self-motivated.

Students must also be prepared to attend lunch and twilight sessions.

Life After Laurus

The career opportunities available in the art/ photography world are vast and diverse as are the routes which students who wish to pursue their art and design/ photography education can take; from AS/A2 Levels, to BTEC National courses specialising in specific areas such as, Fashion and Clothing and Photography.

Courses such as these can then lead onto Higher Education courses and careers in Architecture, Fine Art, Animation and Illustration, Media, Jewellery Design, Fashion, Education, Graphic Design, Furniture Design, Photography and Film to name but a few.

Alternatively, if a student would rather enter the work place post 16, then there are many careers in the creative industries that would welcome a GCSE in Photography, some of which provide further learning opportunities within them, for example a Modern Apprenticeship.

Additional Requirements

A proven competency and work ethic in KS3 Art and Design Technology, rendering a teacher recommendation.

GCSE Physical Education

(cannot be combined with BTEC Sport)

Examination Board and Syllabus

Edexcel GCSE in Physical Education

Form of Assessment & Course Content

Theory 60%

This is externally assessed through two written examination papers these include multiple-choice questions, short-answer, and longer-answer questions.

Component 1 - Fitness and Body Systems - 36%

Exam 1 hour 30 minutes / 80 marks

Topics include:

Applied Anatomy and Physiology - Bodies Systems

Movement Analysis

Physical Training

Use of Data

Component 2 – Health and Performance - 24%

Exam 1 hour 15 minutes / 60 marks

Topics include:

Health, Fitness and Well-being

Sport Psychology

Socio-cultural Influences

Use of Data

Practical 40%

Component 3 - Practical Performance – 30%

All students must complete three practical activities one of which must be a team activity and one must be a game activity.

Component 4 – Personal Exercise Programme – 10%

Students will be required to plan, carry out and evaluate their own personal exercise programme. This must be done on one of the three activities from Component 3.

Examinations and Coursework dates

Final Practical Examination – Date to be set between March 2027 – May 2027

Final Theory Exams x 2 - May 2027 (60% of Final Mark)

NEA – Personal Exercise Programme – Due to be completed in the summer term 2026.

Students can offer off site activities if participating to a high standard. A full list of activities is available on the Edexcel website.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

GCSE Physical Education is a course requiring very specific skills and abilities. Because it requires success in three different practical levels, it is best suited to students who have performed at the highest level in Physical Education throughout Key Stage 3.

In order that we can be confident of your potential to succeed in the subject, we would need to see:

- Evidence of extra-curricular activity both in and outside of school – must already be undertaking elective clubs in **at least one activity** and regularly participating in an activity outside of school from the examination boards recognised list of activities
- Potential to perform in **THREE** different practical areas at a high level
- A willingness to work equally hard on the demanding scientific, English and Maths elements of the course

Some students may need a further consultation with the subject leader for PE and a member of Leadership before being confirmed on to the course.

Students taking GCSE Physical Education will be required to work independently, in pairs and also in teams in the practical elements of the course. They will also be expected to attend elective clubs – there will be a requirement that students attend an extra GCSE practical session either before or after school during the course.

In theory lessons, students will be required to make notes, complete presentations and research projects and produce and perform a six-week personal exercise programme.

Post 16 opportunities and possible career pathways/opportunities

As well as ideal preparation for the A Level Physical Education course, GCSE PE allows for progression to related vocational qualifications, such as BTEC, Firsts and Nationals in Sport or Sport and Exercise Sciences.

This course can lead on to other opportunities in: Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Analysis of Sporting Performance, Sports Science, Sports Psychology, Sports Rehabilitation, Sports Massage, Journalism, Teaching / Lecturing, Recreational Management, Leisure Activities, The Fitness Industry, Strength and Conditioning, Biomechanics, Physiology, Coaching and Officiating.

GCSE Religious Studies

(Religion, Philosophy & Ethics)

Examination Board and Syllabus:

AQA (8062)

Form of assessment:

Paper 1: The study of beliefs, teachings and practices in two religions - Christianity and Islam (Exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, 50% of the GCSE, marked out of 96 with 6 marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar).

Paper 2: The study of Ethical and Philosophical Themes (Exam: 1 hour 45 minutes, 50% of the GCSE, marked out of 96 with 3 marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar)

Course content:

Students on this course will study two components over the two years, each assessed by a written examination at the end of Year 11. Component One (Paper 1) involves the study of the beliefs, teachings and practices of two major world religions: Christianity and Islam. Component two (Paper 2) is a study of four Philosophical and Ethical themes, which involves looking at the issues raised by those themes from the perspective of the two religions studied in Paper 1.

This exciting and thought-provoking course offers a GCSE in Religious Studies, but more importantly offers the opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the diversity of beliefs and practices within two major world religions and to reflect upon many of the philosophical and ethical matters relating to what it means to be a human being living in today's complex world. Themes on offer include relationships, sexuality and families, views on the value of human life and how those may be challenged by modern medical and scientific developments (abortion, euthanasia, genetic experimentation), arguments relating to the nature and existence of God, questions of whether violence and war can be justified, arguments relating to the aims and methods of punishment for crime, and matters of rights, social justice and equality in today's society.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

- A curiosity about the religious, philosophical and ethical beliefs of others and how such beliefs influence people's lives and choices
- Extended writing and English skills
- Respect for other people and their views
- A willingness to listen to others and respect their opinions
- The ability to work independently and exercise research skills
- A willingness to listen to different ideas and to justify your own point of view

Life After Laurus

A GCSE in RS is a highly valued qualification. Colleges, universities and employers recognise the study of religions, philosophy and ethics as an academically challenging and rigorous subject that provides students with vital transferable skills and an

appreciation for issues of relevance to individuals, communities and professions across the whole of our society. Possible pathways include:

- Progression onto further study – obvious progression routes include A Level Religious Studies or A-Level Philosophy, although the content and skill development in this course has relevance for a wider range of subjects at the next academic level, including: History, Geography, English, Law, Psychology, Ethics, Theology, Sociology and Politics.
- Careers which favour an RS and Philosophy qualification. These include: Academia, The Police Service, Teaching, Medicine, Law, Journalism, Sport, Hospitality, Social Work, The Armed Forces and many more.

Additional Requirements

Students wishing to choose this course should be dedicated and self-motivated to independent research. They should enjoy participating in class discussion and respectful debate and have a good record of being organised and prepared for lessons.

GCSE Separate Sciences

Examination Board and Syllabus

AQA - GCSE Biology (Triple)

AQA - GCSE Chemistry (Triple)

AQA - GCSE Physics (Triple)

Form of Assessment

Students studying the Separates Science course are awarded three GCSE grades. They sit two 1 hour 45-minute exams in each of the three sciences — Biology, Chemistry and Physics — resulting in six exams in total.

Assessment is 100% examination, featuring a mixture of multiple-choice questions, structured responses, short closed-answer items and extended open-response questions. Final grades are determined by taking the average performance across all six exams.

Course Content

The specifications are divided into topics which each cover different key areas of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Practical skills are developed throughout the courses and assessed in the written papers.

GCSE Biology	GCSE Chemistry	GCSE Physics
1. Cell biology 2. Organisation 3. Infection and response 4. Bioenergetics	1. Atomic structure and the periodic table 2. Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter 3. Quantitative chemistry 4. Chemical changes 5. Energy changes	1. Energy 2. Electricity 3. Particle model of matter 4. Atomic structure
5. Homeostasis and response 6. Inheritance, variation and evolution 7. Ecology	6. The rate and extent of chemical change 7. Organic chemistry 8. Chemical analysis 9. Chemistry of the atmosphere 10. Using resources	5. Force 6. Waves 7. Magnetism and electromagnetism 8. Space physics

Skills and Qualities required for success

The course is designed to inspire, motivate and challenge students through a broad, coherent and practical programme of study that feels both rewarding and worthwhile.

It nurtures learners' curiosity about the living, material and physical worlds, offering meaningful insight into how scientific ideas develop and how Science operates in real contexts.

By building strong scientific understanding and confidence, the course empowers students to engage with science more deeply and to make informed choices about future study and careers in science and related fields.

Life After Laurus

Although not essential, the Separate Sciences course is highly recommended for those students considering choosing Sciences at A Level. The course provides an excellent grounding for A Levels in a broad range of subjects (especially in the Sciences) as well as other Further Education courses.

In addition to this, studying the separate sciences allows you to go into each of them in more depth. The knowledge and skills you will learn are useful for a range of careers in fields such as medicine, engineering, healthcare, environmental work, construction, and architecture.

Additional requirements

We recommend that students with a strong interest in science choose Separate Science as an option. This pathway provides additional curriculum time, allowing learners to explore all three disciplines in greater depth.

GCSE Spanish

Examination Board and Syllabus

AQA GCSE Spanish (8692)

Forms of Assessment

All GCSE language courses are now linear, which means that you will be assessed on all four skills at the end of the course. There is a higher and foundation option for:

- **Listening** (25%) – you will need to demonstrate that you can understand and respond to different types of spoken language.
- **Reading** (25%) – you will need to demonstrate that you can understand and respond to different types of written language.
- **Speaking** (25%) – you will need to communicate and interact effectively in speech for a variety of purposes.
- **Writing** (25%) – you will need to communicate effectively in writing for a variety of purposes.

You are already very familiar with how to learn another language – how to listen and speak, understand grammar, write and translate, and these are all skills you can transfer to another GCSE Language. That's why, in the Laurus Trust, the majority of students who take a second GCSE language do just as well or even better than they did in their first one. You will have met similar topics before in your French GCSE, so you will be well equipped and prepared for the format of the Spanish GCSE.

*Please note that there are some small changes in specification from the French exam that you will have completed in 2025. These are mainly:

- Less vocabulary to learn
- Dictation in the listening exam
- Reading a text aloud in the speaking exam

Course Content

The topic areas that are covered in the four parts of the examination are:

- **Identity and Culture:** e.g. technology, social media, relationships, customs and festivals.
- **Local, national, international and global areas of interest:** e.g. voluntary work, the environment and tourism.
- **Current and future study and employment:** e.g. career choices, life at college and ambitions.

The content will teach you all about Spanish and Latin American food, customs, traditions and of course, the world-famous fiestas!

Life After Laurus

Students who are hoping to pursue a university or professional career will particularly benefit from pursuing an additional language. **Speaking multiple languages really stands out.** Universities know that languages are demanding, academic subjects that improve your ability to speak and write in English. They deepen your knowledge of the English language and etymology. They help you recognise patterns and crack codes more quickly than others. **Having extra GCSE languages can therefore mark you out as particularly talented, whatever course you may be applying for.**

Being multilingual can create opportunities to travel, study or live and work abroad. **Language skills can be transferred to all types of work, and employers will be looking for these key skills.** As a scientist, you may want to collaborate with universities around the world; as a journalist, you might want to interview people in different countries; or as an engineer, you might get the chance to work on a major international project. Whatever job you are applying for, speaking multiple languages could put you ahead of all the other candidates. **Whatever you want to do in life, knowing more languages will grant you more opportunities.**

However, it is not all about jobs and courses. Some of the biggest social problems we face today come from a lack of understanding and respect between people from different parts of the world. Learning languages helps you to understand people from other cultures, and to make yourself understood to them too – so, by learning more of them, you could become part of the force that solves these problems for good.

BTEC Health and Social Care

Examination Board and Syllabus

Pearson Level 1 and 2. Qualification number **603/7047/6**

Form of Assessment

This is a level 2 qualification. The grades range from Level 1 Pass to Level 2 Distinction. 40% of the course is externally assessed in a 2-hour exam, while 60% is assessed through coursework internally during guided learning hours. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by meeting deadlines.

Course Content:

Health and Social Care is a practical and engaging vocational subject for students who want to make a positive difference in the world. It introduces the key knowledge, skills and understanding needed to work in this sector. The course offers hands-on experiences, helping students learn core care values, develop valuable skills and explore potential career pathways with growing confidence.

Students will complete three mandatory units

- **Component 1: Human Lifespan Development**
- **Component 2: Health and Social Care Services and Values**
- **Component 3: Health and Wellbeing**

Components 1 & 2 are internally marked and graded by the teacher. Component 3 is an externally set and marked, synoptic, case study-based exam. The exam is based on the work studied in all three components. Coursework assignments will take a range of formats including report writing, information packs, writing reviews and demonstrating care values in a real situation then reviewing their own practice.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

You will need to be organised as the coursework projects have strict deadlines. You will need to work independently as well as part of a group. You will develop debating skills as we discuss key issues and current affairs in class. You will develop compassion and empathy as you learn about different people and wider society. You will probably learn a lot about yourself too!

Life after Laurus

The BTEC in Health and Social Care qualification can lead on to a Level 3 Health and Social Care (A level equivalent) studied at college, or careers within the Health and Social Care sectors. The NHS is the UK's largest employer so Health and Social Care can take you down a wide range of pathways. These careers include Nursing, Midwifery, Allied Health Professionals such as Paramedic and Radiography, Counselling or Education.

BTEC Award in Sport

(cannot be combined with GCSE Physical Education)

Examination Board and Syllabus

Edexcel – Level 2

Form of Assessment

The course will be assessed through the following methods:

Students will complete 3 components.

Component 1 - *Preparing Participants to Take Part in Sport and Physical Activity.* Students will explore the different types and provision of sport and physical activity available for different types of participants, barriers to participation and ways to overcome these barriers to increase participation in sport and physical activity. They will also research equipment and technological advances in a chosen sport or physical activity and how to prepare our bodies for participation in sport and physical activity.

Component 2 - *Taking Part and Improving Other Participants.* Students will investigate the components of fitness and their effect on performance, take part in practical sport, explore the role of officials in sport and learn to apply methods and sporting drills to improve other participants' sporting performance

Component 3 - *Developing Fitness to Improve Other participants' Performance in sport and physical activity.* This component is externally assessed, it is worth 60 marks and is a 90-minute exam.

Course Content

During practical sessions students will reinforce the work covered in class and computer rooms. Students will require ICT skills to access information required for independent study, ensuring work is presented to a high standard.

Students will study a wide range of practical activities – Health and fitness; including fitness testing and methods of training, Badminton, Basketball, Netball, Football, Climbing, Trampolining and Athletics, Leading Sports Activities and Training for Personal Fitness.

These areas of study have been chosen to provide the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to prepare learners for employment and/or to provide career development opportunities for those already in work.

Skills and Qualities Required for Success

- A keen interest in all areas of sport, not just practical lessons
- Competence in the use of computers
- A keen interest in how the body copes with sporting activities
- Ability to lead others
- Ability to work independently on a task over several lessons
- The ability to produce presentations and perform them in front of others
- Bringing your PE kit to every practical lesson.
- Ability to keep to deadlines

Please note that there will only be ONE practical sports lesson a week which will vary from fitness testing to analysing practical performance – you will not be playing a sport every lesson.

As part of the course students will need to be filmed leading a group in a warm up. as well as being filmed completing various skills and competitive situations in their chosen practical activity. Students cannot opt out of this section of the course as it carries significant marks for the overall award.

Post 16 opportunities and possible career pathways/opportunities

BTEC Sport allows for progression to related vocational qualifications, such as BTEC, Firsts and Nationals in Sport or Sport and Exercise Sciences.

This course can lead on to other opportunities in: Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Analysis of Sporting Performance, Sports Science, Sports Psychology, Sports Rehabilitation, Sports Massage, Journalism, Teaching / Lecturing, Recreational Management, Leisure Activities, The Fitness Industry, Strength and Conditioning, Biomechanics, Physiology, Coaching and Officiating.