

## The Upper School at Alleyn's (for external candidates)

### September 2020 Entry



## Introduction

The step up into the Sixth Form is a big one for any student. However, it should be one you are more than ready and able to take, having gained the qualifications to move into more specialisation in your academic studies.

The Upper School at Alleyn's is a place of increased freedom, offering far greater scope for individual choice and expression. This is reflected in the way we set up the curriculum, the small sizes of the new Tutor Groups and new academic classes, and in offering the chance for you to take a leading role in activities and the general running of the school.

For our 2019 leavers, 89% of grades were A\*, A or B, 69% were A\* or A grades and 31% were A\* grades. Over half our students achieved at least 3 A\* and A grades and there was a 100% pass rate. 91% of our university applicants were successful in achieving their first or second choice of university place.

## The Academic Curriculum at Alleyn's

If you came to one of our Open Days this term, you will have heard about the A Level curriculum we will offer from September 2019. We will continue to offer the chance to start with 4 A Level subjects for those that want to, but we will also offer some alternatives to the fourth subject which you can read about below. You have chosen subjects already for the purposes of the 16+ admissions process, as this helps our initial timetabling and also gives you some flexibility while you are firming up your decisions. We cannot change the subjects you have selected until the end of the admissions process as this would be an administrative nightmare, but for those students to whom we are able to offer a place, we will ask you to confirm your options if and when you accept your offer.

***"Our curriculum allows the flexibility to choose between breadth and specialism"***

We offer three main pathways for Upper School students:

### Pathway 1 - 4 A Level subjects

*Most suited to those who are unsure on their future direction and would value the option of dropping a subject at the end of Y12. Alternatively, able scientists who plan to continue with 4 A level subjects should choose this option. NB: Those studying Mathematics and Further Mathematics must choose 4 A level subjects.*

### Pathway 2 - 3 subjects + AS Maths, AS English Language or a Language qualification (DELE, DELF, ZDaF)

*Universities usually make offers based on 3 A Level subjects and for some, the option to study a course that will give them useful transferable skills, maintain breadth and gain a qualification without having to commit to 4 full A Levels, will be more attractive.*

### Pathway 3 - 3 subjects + EPQ

*The Extended Project Qualification suits students who are willing to commit to an extended research project that will give useful skills that universities value, are able to work independently without constant supervision, and who have a particular interest that they wish to pursue. The EPQ starts in October of Y12 and finishes in September of Y13.*

**Please note: all options are subject to numbers, staffing and timetable constraints.**

NB: Although we are currently planning to offer the arrangements described in this booklet for September 2020, if we receive any advice from UCAS (the body that deals with admissions to UK Higher Education) and universities on the way they deal with admissions, we may adjust our curriculum so that it plays to the strengths of our students. We will ensure that any changes are communicated to parents and students.

### Linear A-Levels

September 2015 saw the first phase of the introduction of new linear specifications in the A-level curriculum; the roll out of the new specifications is due to be completed by the exam boards in September 2017 and from this point, all subjects will be examined at the end of the two-year course, *i.e.* the final A-level grade is assessed in one sitting in the Summer of Year 13.

Students will sit internal exams at the end of Year 12 as an interim guide to their progress, and will sit mock exams after half term in February 2022 to prepare for the final exams in summer 2022.

For those who choose Pathway 1, if you decided to drop an A level subject at the end of Year 12, you will not be able to take an AS level exam in it as the AS exams are decoupled from the A level and you will not have had the correct preparation for the AS exam. We refer to the skills you have gained in your UCAS reference, and studying the subject will have given you a useful insight and flexibility over the direction you wish to take so this is still worthwhile. You will normally pursue the 4th A level for the whole of Year 12.

### AS Levels and Modern Foreign Language Qualifications

For those students who choose to follow Pathway 2, note that the AS/language qualifications will require fewer taught lessons than a full A level subject **but will still be taught over 2 years and examined at the end of Year 13**. You should consider what you might gain from each option:

*AS Mathematics* - we are planning to continue to offer AS Mathematics in addition to the full A level in Mathematics. It is likely that those students where Mathematics would be of benefit or interest (eg those studying Arts A levels who maintain an interest in Maths, or possibly those who are studying Sciences) might consider this option. Check carefully that a future university course would not require the full A level in Mathematics before deciding on this option, and seek further guidance from us if required.

*AS English Language* - might suit those students who have varied interests; perhaps scientists who would like something different as their fourth subject without committing to a full A level in English Literature. This would also complement students doing other essay subjects.

*International Language Qualifications* - we are planning to offer this post-GCSE language course in Spanish (DELE), French (DELF) and German (ZDaF) which all have a language and cultural element and do not have the literature modules that A-Level includes. This will suit a student who enjoyed languages at GCSE, does not want to commit to a full A Level, but wants to keep his/her language up to help with future career choices.

## **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)**

The EPQ is worth half an A level and is a piece of research undertaken by students that culminates in a 6000 word dissertation together with a presentation. There is also a taught element on aspects such as how to research, reference, avoid plagiarism, choose an effective research question, organise a project and present one's findings.

Students will be assigned a supervisor who will meet them regularly to check on progress. An important part of the EPQ is in the careful recording of these meetings and of the research process, as well as the final result. Students define their research question in the October of Year 12, will finalise their dissertation over the summer between Years 12 and 13, and present their findings in September of Year 13, just before they need to submit their UCAS applications.

For students who are interested in pursuing a piece of academic research and producing a dissertation but would prefer to study a different pathway, the School's Governors' Research Project Prize (GRPP) which students can enter at the end of Year 12 caters for this. Every year we receive around 40 entries for this prestigious essay competition and although the administrative requirements may be less involved than the EPQ, the final submissions are always of an amazingly high standard and the experience of the GRPP stands students in great stead when it comes to making university applications, giving them lots to discuss in their personal statements.

## **Making Subject Choices**

In arriving at the right choice of subjects, you should balance the following important factors:

- your academic interests
- your personal abilities, aptitudes and skills
- your possible university and career choice (if known), taking care to note the points above
- subjects available at school.

In making these decisions it is preferable to go for subjects you are good at and really keen on. Your interest and enthusiasm are likely to lead to success. Good grades are important; mere passes do not secure places at university. Courses such as Medicine, English, History, Law and Veterinary Science usually require very high grades (many courses ask for at least one A\* alongside two A grades these days).

The choice of subjects is very important. You should have a real interest in the subjects and show some evidence of having the necessary skills to cope with the course through the work you have done at GCSE. A-level study is more intensive than that involved in the courses you are currently studying. A-levels will involve more developed skills of independent study and a real commitment to extending your academic interests and abilities.

For the subjects you are considering:

- Do you find them genuinely interesting? Do you want to do twice as many lessons in that subject as you do now, and more homework in it (remembering you are of course doing fewer subjects overall!)?

- Will you be good at it? Do the skills required match your strengths?

A part of your subject selection process should also involve the impact of your choices on possible study at university, but the best starting point is still to consider which subjects you really want to study.

### **The Impact of Higher Education on A-Level Choices**

The Russell Group is a group of 24 well-respected universities who have produced guidance on making A-Level subject choices. It is well worth looking at this carefully when making your choices: <https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>

If you think your future lies in the Arts (i.e. not Science!), then you have a degree of flexibility over your choice. You may wish to study a contrasting subject, or to combine a more practical subject with other choices.

On the science side, many degree courses require two science A-levels. Therefore, by taking three sciences, you have a much greater choice of science degree at the end of your course. For many science degrees Mathematics or Chemistry are required subjects. Check this out before it is too late! For Medicine, Medical Schools expect you to study Chemistry and Biology amongst your subjects. They may ask for four subjects and are sometimes keen that these include a contrasting subject. For Medicine at Cambridge, three science subjects are required (or two science subjects and Mathematics). Choices such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and English or Physics, Chemistry, Biology and a modern language would be fine, as would many others. If you are planning to study Medicine, you should seek advice from Mrs Smiddy, the Deputy Head of Upper School.

*NB: Some Medical Schools may require a 4th A level, an EPQ or an AS level in a 4th subject. There are also requirements to have an English Speaking Qualification for entry to some Medical Schools. If you are considering Medicine, you will need to seek advice on this aspect as soon as you start Year 12.*

For Economics degrees and certain Science, Computer Science and Engineering courses (at Cambridge especially, but also elsewhere) it is important to be aware of the expectations of the level of Mathematics that the course requires.

Note that our usual expectation for students studying Double Mathematics is for them to continue with four subjects until the end of Year 13. This is because some universities might regard Double Mathematics with only one other subject to be too narrow a combination.

Modern languages are not just a degree subject in themselves but are also often combined with or useful for those wishing to go on to study History or English at university.

In general there is more flexibility on the arts side because fewer courses have a strong vocational bias and students are encouraged to follow their interests. Many courses and careers will accept students who have demonstrated real ability in their 16+ subjects, almost irrespective of the actual subjects studied.

The following table, with information adapted from the Informed Choices website (accessed in September 2019), gives an idea of the subjects required for different degree courses, but

in all cases please do not rely on this as definitive as entry requirements do change - please seek advice from us.

*NB: the indicated "Useful subject(s)" are only a guideline and there may be many other combinations that are suitable for a particular degree course involving other subjects not listed, including subjects that we offer but some other schools don't, such as Film Studies and Art History. If you have a particular university course in mind and are doubtful about your combination of subjects, it may be sensible to contact a selection of universities to ask their advice, or look at their websites. Some universities have a list of preferred/non-preferred subjects on their websites (such as UCL, Sheffield and LSE).*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Essential subject(s)</b>	<b>Useful subject(s)</b>
Accountancy (also Banking/Finance/Insurance)	Usually none, although one or two universities require Mathematics.	Mathematics and Economics.
Aeronautical Engineering	Mathematics and Physics.	Further Mathematics, Design Technology.
Anthropology	None	A small number of courses like a science such as Biology.
Archaeology	None	Geography, History, Classical Civilisation, Maths, Science subjects or Languages can all be useful.
Architecture	None but an Art/Science mix is preferred. Some may require Art. A portfolio is essential.	Art, Mathematics, Design Technology and Physics.
Art and Design	Art or Design Technology (portfolio needed for entry to Art Foundation and degree courses)	Most entrants onto Art and Design degrees will have done a one-year Art Foundation Course after completing Year 13.
Biochemistry	Always Chemistry and some universities will say you must have Biology as well, while some will say Chemistry plus one from Mathematics/Physics/ Biology. Doing Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics or Physics will keep all Biochemistry courses open to you.	Biology, Mathematics, Physics.
Biology	Biology, plus another science usually Chemistry. A few universities specify two sciences.	Mathematics, Physics, Geography, Psychology
Biomedical Sciences (including Medical Science)	Normally two from Biology as well as Chemistry, Mathematics or Physics. Chemistry is essential for some courses.	Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics.
Business Studies	None, but some universities may	Mathematics and Economics.

	require GCSE maths at grade 7 or 6.	
Chemical Engineering	Chemistry and Mathematics and sometimes Physics as well. Mathematics with at least one of Chemistry or Physics.	
Chemistry	Chemistry and a second science, preferably Mathematics. Some universities will have a list of the subjects they will accept as a second science, so check individual requirements carefully.	Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Physics, Biology.
Civil Engineering	Mathematics. A second science may also be essential such as Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography.	Further Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Geography.
Classics/Classical Studies	For Classics courses Latin or Ancient Greek are required. For Classical Studies and Classical Civilisation courses most subjects will be considered.	Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Classical Civilisation. There are some Classics courses which will allow you to start Latin and/or Classical Greek from scratch, but they do look for evidence of linguistic ability
Computer Science	Mathematics.	Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Physics, Philosophy.
Dentistry	Chemistry and Biology for most courses, but some require Mathematics or Physics as well.	Mathematics, Physics.
Drama	An arts or humanities subject is usually essential	English Literature, English Literature and Language, Drama & Theatre.
Economics*	Mathematics	Economics, History.
Electrical/ Electronic Engineering	Mathematics. A second science is essential, such as Physics, Chemistry	Further Mathematics.
Engineering (General)	Mathematics and Physics.	Further Mathematics.
English	English Literature.	Other Arts/Humanities subjects.
Environmental Science/Studies	Many courses will ask for two from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Geography and Psychology.	Another facilitating subject, particularly a science.
European Studies	A Modern Foreign Language.	Another Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Politics, Latin, Classical

		Civilisation or Greek.
French	French.	Another Modern Foreign Language.
Geography	Geography.	Some Geography BSc (science) degrees prefer one from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics or Physics.
Geology/Earth Sciences	Usually two from Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology and Economics, Further Maths, Geography or Psychology.	
German	German (a handful of universities offer the opportunity to study German from scratch, without German A-level).	Another Modern Foreign Language.
History	History.	Other Arts, Humanities or Languages.
History of Art	None but an essay-based subject may be useful	Art, English Literature, History, Religious Studies, History of Art, French, German, Spanish, Italian.
Italian	Italian or another language such as French, German or Spanish.	
Law	Usually none, but an essay-based subject may be useful.	History gives you good relevant skills for Law but is not essential.
Management Studies	Sometimes Mathematics.	Mathematics, Economics.
Materials Science	Mathematics and Physics are usually essential.	
Mathematics	Mathematics and sometimes Further Mathematics.	Further Mathematics, Physics.
Mechanical Engineering	Mathematics, Physics.	Further Mathematics.
Media Studies	There are usually no essential subjects	English, Film Studies, Psychology.
Medicine	If you do Chemistry, Biology and one from Mathematics or Physics you should keep all the medical schools open to you. Medical Schools require Chemistry and Biology. (Requirements change regularly)	Sometimes a contrasting (non-science) subject.
Music	For most traditional courses, Music is usually essential but some courses may accept a practical Grade 8 instead.	Some universities may have a preference for at least one essay-based subject.
Nursing & Midwifery	There are usually no essential subjects but some courses may ask for one of the following: Biology, Chemistry, Maths, Physics	Biology, Psychology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics.

	or Psychology.	
Philosophy*	None	Mathematics, Classical Civilisation, Philosophy and Religious Studies.
Physics	Mathematics, Physics.	Further Mathematics.
Physiotherapy	Biology. Some universities will ask for a second science in addition to Biology and may have a list of the subjects they will accept. Check their individual requirements carefully.	
Politics*	Usually none	Politics, History, Philosophy, Economics, English Literature, Religious Studies.
Psychology	One of these subjects is usually essential: Biology, Psychology, Chemistry, Economics, Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Geography, Economics and Further Maths.	Some courses may ask for two Science subjects from the list.
Religious Studies/Theology	None	Religious Studies, Philosophy, English Literature, History.
Sociology	There are usually no essential subjects, but essay-based subjects may be useful	Psychology, Geography.
Spanish	Spanish (a few degrees will also consider French, German).	Another Modern Foreign Language
Sports Science/Physical Education	Two of the following are usually essential Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology or Physical Education	Physical Education, Psychology. Some universities will accept physical education / sport science as an alternative science subject
Veterinary Science	Usually essential are Chemistry and Biology and one from Mathematics/Physics so that you have all universities open to you.	

\*A note on PPE from Oxford's website: "Although a background in Mathematics is not formally required for admission, PPE applicants should have sufficient interest in, and aptitude for, mathematics to cope with the mathematical elements of the course. Mathematics is a particular advantage for the Economics component of the course, as well as for the first-year logic course in philosophy, and for understanding theories and data in politics. It is useful to have learnt the basics of differentiation before starting your university course in PPE. Many successful applicants have studied Maths to at least AS-level, or another equivalent." <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/philosophy-politics-and-economics>

## Entry expectations and A-level courses

It is our experience that if you do not gain at least an A in the subject of your choice at GCSE - or related field in the case of subjects which appear in the Upper School curriculum but not at GCSE - you are likely to find the course too demanding and probably unprofitable. It is our experience that past students who have started an A-level with lower than a grade 7 in the subject at GCSE have often struggled at A-level (as have even those with a grade 7 in some cases).

**Therefore, you must gain at least a grade 7 (and preferably an 8) at GCSE in a subject you wish to study at A-Level. To study Mathematics or Further Mathematics you need an 8 in GCSE Mathematics.**

**To study Chemistry, Physics or Biology you need at least a grade 7 in the corresponding Science GCSE or a grade 8 in that subject's component of the Double Science GCSE. In addition, we expect you to have at least a 7 in GCSE Maths.**

For new subjects, the following entry expectations apply:

Economics	7 in GCSE Mathematics and 7 in GCSE English Literature or English Language
Art History	7 in GCSE English Literature
Politics	7 in GCSE History (preferred) or English Literature or English Language
Philosophy	7 in GCSE English Language
Physical Education	7 in GCSE Biology
Psychology	7 at GCSE in at least two out of three of: a Science, English Literature or Language, and Mathematics
Film Studies	7 in GCSE English Literature and English Language

In addition, we expect you to gain at least 53 points in your GCSEs, counting only those in which you have scored at least a grade 5 (or C grade if letter grades apply), with appropriate grades in the areas (or related disciplines) you have chosen to pursue (see above), in order to start in the Upper School. (If your school offers qualifications which use letter grades, we count A\* as 8, A as 7, B as 6 and C as 5.)

## Changes to Choices

We shall do everything we can to accommodate your choices and it is important that when we ask you to confirm your subject choices you have undertaken some good thinking and research, so that the information you give will be as accurate as possible. Despite all our efforts, occasionally a combination cannot be offered but this is rare. Of course you can apply to change your original choices after receipt of your GCSE results, but we shall construct the timetable on the best information we receive so that we can offer as many subject combinations as possible so not all changes can be guaranteed at that stage as some combinations of subjects may no longer be possible or classes may be full.

## **Why study at Alleyn's for the Sixth Form?**

At Alleyn's, we work hard to ensure a really positive experience of 16+ education:

- You will get a fabulous academic training from enthusiastic and experienced teachers while learning alongside bright and motivated fellow pupils. Nothing is more important than the community of learners you interact with and at Alleyn's its quality is outstanding.
- You will benefit from an engaging Enrichment programme helping you to develop your enjoyment of ideas and the world around you.
- The style of learning, opportunities for private study and access to the sixth form facilities provides a brilliant introduction to the independence demanded for study and work beyond school.
- You are guaranteed personal care and monitoring. Alleyn's is a safe place to stretch your wings in the Sixth Form. We allow for more individualisation (eg we have a Dress Code not a uniform), but we also take care to support you during a time of change. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the demands of a more adult way of working. Your tutor has a daily role in seeing that you are doing well, and there is also back-up from your Housemaster and the Sixth Form team. You will not be left to sink or swim, and we shall regularly have a chance to discuss with you how you see things are going. In the first term there is a consultation evening which you attend with your parents which enables you to have input in your academic progress, as well as your teachers and tutor.
- You will receive advice on university and careers options from a large, enthusiastic and highly-informed team. Regular sessions are organised and Alleyn's invites representatives of Higher Education institutions and varied careers to help you guide your thoughts. Alleyn's has had great success in placing students at their first choice universities.
- You get the chance to take a lead in the community. All of you will have Prefect duties in Year 12, and we shall rely on you to help the school community work smoothly and to set a good example to the younger pupils. In many of the interests you have been pursuing since joining Alleyn's (like clubs & societies or CCF) you will have a chance to play a leading part and exercise your own special talents and interests.
- The games and sports facilities are second to none, and you get the chance to take physical exercise as a part of your weekly routine. You can be a part of a team (we run one of the biggest team sports programmes in schools of our type) or just take some personal exercise by attending the gym. You can take up new sports and meet new teachers and students.
- There are huge opportunities for involvement in Drama and Music. Apart from performing there are all kinds of other roles you can adopt in these high-profile activities at Alleyn's, such as back-stage or front-of-house work.
- The Upper School at Alleyn's is a vibrant, exciting and caring community. It is acknowledged to be one of the best at managing the need for increased freedom while guaranteeing care and sensitive, personalised and individual guidance.

**Dr RCJ Atkinson**  
**September 2019**