

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE AT 16

PRESTON MANOR SIXTH FORM

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS



VI

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Striving for Excellence

A-LEVELS

The information is adapted from advice given by the Russell Group universities in their *Informed Choices* publication.



HOW ARE THEY ORGANISED?

A-Levels are completed over 2 years. Most universities require 3 A-Level (or equivalent) subjects. No university will ask for more than 3.

Top universities like Oxford and Cambridge will only make an offer based on 3 A-Level subjects and will NOT require any additional AS qualifications.

Top universities WILL require top A-Level results eg from A*A* A to AAA.

Don't UNDERESTIMATE the work involved in achieving these results

"We'd rather applicants develop broader and deeper knowledge of the subjects most relevant/closest to their chosen course than accumulate additional A Levels."

Cambridge University

When would it be an advantage to take extra qualifications?

- For some Maths, Economics and Engineering courses at very competitive universities it would be an advantage to have Further Maths as well. If you have shown through your achievement at GCSE that you can cope, you can do A-Level Maths and A-Level Further Maths as an extra 4th A-Level.
- For Medicine and Dentistry, you must take Chemistry and Biology. Maths isn't required BUT if you are strong in Maths, it can be an advantage to keep your Maths going post GCSE. This is because you will have to do an extra admissions exam which include Maths (UCAT).
- Medical schools also like candidates with non-science subjects as their 3rd A-Level eg History, Religious Studies, Languages, English Literature, Geography, Psychology
- So, for Medicine & Dentistry, only do Maths to A-Level if you can get an A/A* in it.

YOUR GCSE QUALIFICATIONS WILL COUNT

Universities may ask for a specific number of GCSEs (or their equivalent). For example, a number of medical courses ask for a certain number of A/7+ Grades; typically, students who gain places on Medicine/Dentistry courses have mostly A/A* (7/8/9) grades at GCSE.

GCSE English Language and Maths are required at 4/5 at least. At many universities, this is a universal entry requirement for any course.

For many courses a grade 6 at least in GCSE English is needed, with science and engineering courses in particular often specifying this. Equally, courses such as Business and Psychology, commonly ask for a 6 grade in mathematics and, in some cases, sciences.

A number of universities ask that grades and number of subjects are achieved at one sitting. Some do not accept 're-sits' at GCSE. If you think this might affect you and a university's policy is not clear from its published admissions policies, it is sensible to check with Admissions staff before applying.

The GCSE entrance requirements for individual degree courses is quite varied depending on the university. Generally though, the more competitive the university, the higher the GCSE grade requirements are.



The summary below gives an idea of some of the GCSE requirements that you might come across for certain degree courses. Remember that these are only examples. It's important to check university websites for detailed requirements before applying.

- Applicants for Medicine/Dentistry/ Veterinary Medicine will need to work towards as many top grades as possible, showing ability across subject areas – competition for places on these university courses is very high.
- For a degree in English, universities sometimes look for applicants to have a GCSE in a modern language.
- For a Business degree, a grade B/6 in GCSE Maths is often required.
- A grade B/6 in Maths and sometimes Science is often required for a degree in Psychology.
- To study a science subject at university (including Biology, Chemistry or Physics) applicants who are not offering Maths at Advanced level will often need to have achieved a grade B/6 in Maths at GCSE. BUT more competitive universities will require higher grades OR an A-Level in Maths. It's important to check the university website.



MAKING YOUR CHOICE

Three reasons you may want to continue to study a subject at a higher level are:

- You have been good at and have enjoyed the subject in the past
- You need this subject to enter a particular career or course
- You have not studied the subject before but you have looked into it and think it will suit your strengths.

Other consideration you should take into account:

- Some subjects are definitely more difficult at Advanced Level than GCSE- TALK TO YOUR TEACHERS, FIND OUT IF THEY THINK YOU'LL DO WELL.
- Make sure you get your facts straight. There are many myths about subjects required for courses and careers. TALK TO VI FORM TEAM.

- Taking a completely new subject can be a RISK! What is the new subject actually about? Talk to one of the teachers who teaches it. What SKILLS, INTERESTS and ABILITIES do you have from other subject areas that suggest you will do well in the new subject?
- Another factor to consider if you are aiming for the particularly competitive courses at university, such as Medicine, is that you may require a very high performance in GCSE qualifications. *Does your performance to date match your ambition?* It is important that your decisions are taken on the basis of accurate information and clear thinking.

Whatever you choose now will commit you to certain directions at university and perhaps rule out certain careers.

FIVE POINT PLAN



1

RESEARCH WHAT YOU WANT TO STUDY

Check out the Entry Requirements.

If you have a university course which you are keen on, have you checked the relevant university website or UCAS course search (www.ucas.com) to find out whether this course requires certain subjects at Advanced Level or certain grades at GCSE?

2

NOT SURE YET?

Keep your options open! Pick at least 2 **'Facilitating Subjects.'** **Pick subjects you know you can do well in.**

If you are not sure about what course you want to study at university, it's best to choose at least two **facilitating subjects** (Maths, English, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Geography, History,

Languages). These are the subjects which will keep more options open to you. To get a rough idea of the options the different facilitating subjects will give you in applying to university, you can look at the UCAS website or university websites, or guidance on **subjects required for different degree courses.**

3

GCSE'S

Remember– Your GCSE grades will count. Make sure you understand the GCSE requirements for entry to a competitive university.

Are you on track to achieve the GCSE grades to progress onto the course/courses that you want to do at

Advanced Level and the university course that you may choose to do?

4

THINK BALANCE

Do you have a balance of subject choices that reflect your abilities, strengths and interests?

Have you considered **how subject combinations relate to university courses?** See last section of this booklet

5

KNOW WHY YOU ARE PICKING A SUBJECT

If you want to take a subject that you have not studied before, can you talk for a minute on what this subject is about? Try and unpick why you wish to study this subject. It's not enough to say 'It's interesting', 'I think I'll like it' or 'It will be fun'.



WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

THE ARTIST

If you have talent in music you may well want to study it at university. If so, it is well worth taking Music to Advanced Level (along with performance grades).

If you have a talent in Art you may well be thinking about an Art foundation course as a precursor to a degree programme. You might want to consider an Advanced Level qualification in either Art or Art and Design. Either of these will provide you with the basis for your portfolio, which you will need to gain entry to an art foundation course.

BUT don't pick Art because you think it's a break from writing essays/doing science or maths! It's also hard work and takes up a lot of time to do successfully! Do it because you love it and are talented in it.

For Drama and Dance courses, entry does not always depend on you having studied Drama at A Level. However, entry to higher education in these fields is often largely dependent on performance at an audition. Of course, studying Drama at A-Level is a great way of demonstrating your interest and ability as a performer but preparation for auditions can also be gained from many different out-of-school activities.

THE SCIENTIST

A student who is good at science often chooses Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics and/or Physics. This will keep open all the science/mathematics options at university.

THE LINGUIST

Some students will want to take their linguistic abilities further. Students who study languages are highly sought after by universities for language degrees or courses with a language component such as Law with a language. These degrees are also highly valued by future employers. You can even start a language at university (like Mandarin or Italian) if you have already proved your ability by taking an A Level in a language at school.

ESSAYS, READING, ESSAYS, READING

The majority of students fall into the 'essay' category, where all their subject choices will be in the arts/humanities and social sciences (with perhaps one creative/talent-based subject).

A large range of university degrees in the arts/humanities, social sciences and business fields will be open to these students, but not normally degrees in the mathematics/sciences field.

You will see the Advanced Level subjects which are most commonly essential requirements for different degree courses.

Remember there is no automatic transfer from A-Level to degree level – you will have to compete for your place if it's a very popular subject at a popular university, so:

- If you know you want to apply for a certain degree, you must take the 'essential subjects' at Advanced Level.
- To maximise your chances of gaining a place at a competitive university, you would also be wise to choose one or more of the other 'useful' subjects for the degree in question.

Please note: the entrance requirements for individual universities and courses will vary and this list covers only the most popular courses; not every course is available at Russell Group universities.

You are therefore advised to use this guide in conjunction with more detailed information on the UCAS website, and on university websites.

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

Which A-Level subjects do you need to study? See below for essential and useful subjects for various degrees

	Essential	Useful
Accountancy (also banking, finance, insurance)	Usually none although one or two universities require mathematics	Usually none although one or two universities require mathematics
Actuarial Science/Studies	Mathematics	Further mathematics, economics, business studies (agce, national and diploma)
Aeronautical Engineering	Mathematics and physics	Further mathematics, design technology
Anthropology	None	A small number of courses like a science as-level such as biology. Sociology is also very relevant.
Architecture	None	Art, Mathematics, Design Technology and Physics. Agce or national art and design may also be useful at some universities. Do note that a portfolio of drawings and ideas may be asked for.
Art and Design	Art or Graphics	Design Technology, Art & Design. Do note that 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 degrees 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.	Maths/Physics

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

	Essential	Useful
Biology	Biology, Chemistry	Mathematics or Physics
Biomedical sciences (including medical science)	Normally two from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics. Chemistry is essential for some courses	Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics
Business Studies	None	Mathematics, Business Studies (agce, national and diploma) and economics
Chemical Engineering	Chemistry and Mathematics and sometimes Physics as well	Physics, Biology, Further Mathematics
Chemistry	Chemistry and often Mathematics. Most courses require Chemistry and would like Mathematics and one other science subject (for example, Physics or Biology)	Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Physics, Biology
Childhood Studies	None	Psychology, Sociology, agce/national/diploma health and social care.
Classical Studies	For some 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. Do note that there are some classics courses which will allow you to start Latin and/or Classical Greek from scratch.
Computing	For some courses, Mathematics.	Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Computing, Physics, Philosophy, ICT.

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

	Essential	Useful
Dentistry	Chemistry and Biology for most courses, but some require Mathematics or Physics as well	Mathematics, Physics, Further Mathematics
Dietetics	Chemistry, biology	Mathematics
Drama	Some courses require English Literature and for a few courses English and/or Theatre Studies/ Drama. (but applicants need to demonstrate their interest in drama, so studying it at A-Level is an excellent way of showing this)	English Literature, English Literature and Language, Theatre Studies/ Drama
Economics	Usually mathematics	Economics, Further Maths is valued at very competitive universities
Education (See teacher training Electrical/electronic engineering)	Mathematics, Physics	Further Mathematics, ICT, Design Technology
Engineering (general)	Mathematics and Physics	Further Mathematics, Design Technology
English	English Literature/English Literature, Language (some courses will accept English Language)	History, Religious Studies, a Foreign Language
Environmental science/studies	Many courses will ask for two from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Geography	Another facilitating subject, particularly a science
European studies	A Modern Foreign language	Another Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Politics

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

	Essential	Useful
French	French	Another modern foreign language, english literature, history, politics
Geography	Most degrees require 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	Geography, Geology
German	German (a handful of universities offer the opportunity to study German from scratch, without German A-Level)	Another Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Politics
History	Most degrees require history	Economics, English Literature, Philosophy, Politics, Sociology, Theology/Religious Studies, a Modern or Classical Language
History of Art	None	Art, English Literature, History, Theology/Religious Studies, French, German, Spanish, Italian
Italian	Italian or another language such as French, German or Spanish	Another Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Politics
Law	Usually none, although a few universities require English	History; other facilitating subjects There really are no essential subjects for Law. Maybe one choice should involve essay/report writing. History gives you good relevant skills for Law but is not essential

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

	Essential	Useful
Management Studies	Sometimes Mathematics	Mathematics, Economics, Business Studies (agce, national and diploma)
Materials science (including Biomedical Materials Science)	Normally two from Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Biology (also Design Technology for some universities)	Chemistry, Design and Technology, Further Mathematics
Mathematics	Mathematics and sometimes Further Mathematics	Further Mathematics, Physics
Mechanical Engineering	Mathematics, Physics	Further Mathematics, Design and Technology. Mechanical Engineering Departments may have a preference for Mathematics A-Levels with a strong mechanics component
Media studies (including Communication Studies)	A few courses ask for English or Media Studies	English, Media Studies, Sociology, Psychology
Medicine	If you do Chemistry, Biology and one from Mathematics or Physics you will keep all the medical schools open to you. If you do Chemistry and Biology you will keep open the vast majority.	Further Mathematics or a contrasting (non-science) subject
Music	For most traditional courses, Music and grade vii/viii	Some universities have a preference for at least one essay-based subject
Nursing and Midwifery	Usually Biology or another Science	Biology, Sociology, Psychology, Chemistry

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

	Essential	Useful
Occupational Therapy	Some courses ask for Biology	Psychology, Physical Education, Sociology or another Science
Optometry (Ophthalmic Optics)	Two from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics or Physics (some courses prefer Biology as one of the choices)	Psychology, Physical Education, Sociology or another Science
Orthoptics	Biology	Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics
Pharmacy	Chemistry and one from Biology, Mathematics and Physics keeps the vast majority of courses open to you. Some courses like to see Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics. Doing Chemistry and Biology keeps most courses open	Psychology, Physical Education, Sociology or another Science
Philosophy	None	Mathematics, Classical Civilisations, Philosophy and Religious Studies/Theology
Physics	Mathematics, Physics	Further Mathematics, Chemistry
Physiotherapy	Most courses will consider you with just Biology, however some also require a second science from Chemistry, Mathematics or Physics	Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology
Politics	None	Politics, History, Philosophy, Law, Sociology

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

	Essential	Useful
Psychology	A few courses ask for one from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics	Biology, Mathematics, Psychology, Sociology
Religious Studies/Theology	None	Religious Studies/Theology, Philosophy, English Literature, History
Sociology	None	Sociology, Psychology, Geography
Spanish	Spanish (some degrees will also consider French, German or Italian)	Another Modern Foreign Language, English Literature, History, Politics
Speech Therapy	Some degrees want a Science such as biology, chemistry or physics. Some specify biology, but some degrees will consider candidates with none of these	A Modern Foreign Language (for example, French, German, Spanish, Italian), English Language (and Literature), Psychology
Sports Science/Physical education	Many courses want to see one from Biology/Chemistry/Mathematics/Physics (some courses will treat Physical Education as a science equivalent)	Physical Education, Psychology
Surveying	None	For some types of surveying i.e. Building Surveying, Mathematics and Physics could be helpful. For Estate Management (general practice surveying) most A-Level combinations will be considered

A-LEVEL SUBJECTS

Essential

Useful

Teacher Training (Primary and/or Secondary)

Essential Advanced Level qualifications (those best for primary teaching shown in italics)
At least one from Art, Biology, Chemistry, Design and Technology, Drama (Theatre Studies), English, French, Geography, German, History, ICT, Italian, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Physical Education, Religious Studies (Theology), Spanish

Another of the subjects listed.

Veterinary Science

You should do Chemistry and Biology and one from Mathematics/Physics so that you have all universities open to you

Further Mathematics



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Striving for Excellence

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