

# **Key Stage 4 Options**

## **Information Booklet**

### **2023-25**



## Key Stage 4 Options Information for 2023-25

Dear Parent/Carer

The selection of optional subjects at KS4 is one of the crucial moments in any student's secondary education.

This booklet is designed to help guide you and your son or daughter through the process of choosing the curriculum that they will follow in Years 10 and 11. The courses we offer are predominantly GCSEs and will prepare them for their future pathway, whether that is into sixth form study and beyond or through an apprentice-based employment route. There are also vocational options in subjects such as Business, IT and PE and we have provision for alternative study options for a small number of students for whom this is the most appropriate pathway to follow. We are making sure that it is possible for a young person to have a broad and balanced curriculum and that they can start to specialise if they wish.

This booklet is designed to complement the information you will receive in the Options Evening presentation - it is the beginning of the process of choosing GCSEs. If, at any time, you feel that you need further advice and information, then please do not hesitate to contact me or the relevant curriculum leader in the subject you have a query with.

I hope that you find the process straightforward and feel that we are offering the right level of support and guidance to you and your son or daughter.

John Maybury

**Vice-Principal: Curriculum**

## Implications for Post-16 Subject Choices

When considering choices for GCSE courses, students should already have one eye on the subjects they may wish to study after Year 11.

It is always worth bearing in mind that the subjects your son or daughter study in Years 10 and 11 *could* affect their career choices in the future. However, it is most important that their subjects are chosen for the right reasons - that they really enjoy a subject and/ or they are good at it.

If they have a particular career in mind then it is always advisable to check which subjects are required for entry. To choose a subject that has presented difficulties in the past only because it is needed for a particular career is not such a good idea – if they get a low grade then this will not enable them to enter that career anyway, and if the subject plays a large part in the job then it might not be the right path for them. If they are considering university education, then it is worth remembering that three or four subjects taken at GCSE might have to be studied to A Level for entry to university, meaning they are making choices for four (rather than two) years of study.

If they have no career ideas at present, that is perfectly normal for many people at this stage. However, it is then important to consider what career areas they will be consolidating or removing with their choices and to be sure they are happy about them. There are equal opportunities in all subject choices so they should not be swayed by people telling them there are ‘boys’ or ‘girls’ subjects. Also, they should **never** be tempted to choose a subject because a friend is doing it – what works well for them might be a disaster for your son or daughter! They may not even be in the same class anyway... If you are not certain, a focus on EBacc and facilitating choices will keep the most amount of options open for you later on.

There are also some very useful websites to aid your careers research:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>

[www.careerpilot.org.uk](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk)

And, of course, please make use of the expertise available to you at the College – tutors, teachers, Heads of Year, Curriculum Leaders and the Senior Leadership Team, as well as our Careers Advisor. All contact details for key staff are included at the end of this booklet.

## How are GCSEs and Level 2 Vocational Qualifications graded?

<b>GCSE</b>	
<b>New GCSE Grade</b>	<b>Equivalent 'Traditional' Grade</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>A* (top 2% of grades)</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>A*</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>B (strong pass)</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>C (pass)</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>F/G</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>
<b>Vocational Qualifications</b>	
<b>New Grade Equivalent</b>	<b>Equivalent Vocational Grade</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Merit</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>2 and below</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How are GCSEs different to study at Key Stage 3?

- They are more intellectually demanding – questions are more challenging and extended answers are more prevalent in exam papers and assessments
- They are **linear** in most cases, so students take all of their exams at the end of the course
- Non-exam assessment has been removed or reduced in the majority of GCSEs, except for subjects with clear practical elements (Art and Design subjects, Drama, Dance, PE, Media)

### What is the difference between vocational Level 2 courses and GCSEs?

Primarily, the difference lies in how they are assessed and in how they are graded. Vocational courses tend to be more practical in nature and this is reflected in how they are assessed. They still have to take examinations but this is balanced by having practical assessments or controlled assessments (effectively, coursework-type tasks but under timed, exam-style conditions) Vocational courses also have a simplified grading system – Distinction, Merit, Pass.

### What is the compulsory curriculum at Bacon's?

At Bacon's, our GCSE curriculum requires that students study:

- English Language and English Literature
- Maths
- Science (either Triple or combined)
- RE
- A humanities subject – Geography or History
- Core PE and PSHE will be delivered to all students but these will **not** count as GCSEs.

In addition to these, you will also choose 2 other subjects to study

### Will I definitely get onto the subjects I apply for?

The vast majority of students will be allocated the selection of courses they have chosen – the satisfaction rate for this tends to be in the high 90% range. However, each year minor changes do need to be made. This affects only a very few students and we will do everything within our power to offer the selection you ask for. When you make your option choices, we will ask you to add a reserve choice.

## What are the Option subjects available to me?

Students will be required to choose either Geography or History and then 2 subjects from the table below:

Art	Spanish
Computer Science	French
Drama	Computer Science
GCSE PE	Vocational IT
Vocational PE	History (if not already chosen as option 1)
Graphics	Geography (if not already chosen as option 1)
Product Design	Media Studies
Textiles	Vocational Business
Triple Science	Vocational Dance
Vocational Music	

## I Want to go to a top University, which subjects should I choose?

The Russell Group, which represents 24 leading UK universities has higher entrance criteria than most others. It is likely that they would expect students to have studied GCSEs that form the English Baccalaureate.

The English Baccalaureate was introduced as a performance measure for schools in the 2010 performance tables. It is not a qualification in itself but it recognises where students have secured a 5 grade or better across the following academic subjects

- English
- Mathematics
- Sciences
- A Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish)
- History or Geography

Parents of students intending to go on to university might like to read the Russell Group booklet on the importance of EBacc or 'facilitating' subjects at

<http://russellgroup.org/InformedChoices-latest.pdf>.

### **If there aren't enough students opting for a subject, that subject will not run. Is this true?**

Yes. Unfortunately, we cannot run a course for a small number of students. If this happens, students will liaise closely with us to ensure that the next most suitable option is elected for. Students can help us to do this by indicating reserve options where indicated on their forms.

### **If I want to go on to study at Sixth Form, which subjects would be best?**

There are no 'best' options to prepare you for further study – go with your academic or creative strengths. Keep your options broad and balanced. If you wish to study A-Level subjects then you will need to gain a minimum of 5 GCSE passes grade 6 and above. Vocational subjects usually have an entry requirement of Grade 5.

### **Can I change my mind later?**

The subjects you choose are for the next two years. Therefore, it is very important that the right choice is made at the outset. It is only in exceptional circumstances that students are permitted to change their courses once they have begun in September – you will have simply missed too much of a subject if you request to make a change in October, for example. Please bear this in mind when thinking about your choices.

The best way to avoid this is to take a good amount of time when making these option choices and to request a guidance meeting for after the February half-term holiday where any issues or queries can be discussed.

### **Should I study French or Spanish?**

We would strongly advise those students who can readily achieve a Grade 5 or above in a Modern Foreign Language to study it, as it is our strong belief that many students will in their future lives be working for global companies and in different cultural contexts. Studying a language will allow students to compete in the international job market, developing skills and abilities that will stand them in good stead in their future studies or employment, developing an understanding of other cultures.

### **Can I study my own language? Does it count?**

While you may not be able to receive teaching or tutoring for your language at the College, we can enter you for GCSE exams for a range of different languages. You will be able to demonstrate the ability to read, write and speak in your home language to be able to be entered. Specific queries regarding exam entries should be made to Angela Tamufor ([a.tamufor@baconscollege.co.uk](mailto:a.tamufor@baconscollege.co.uk)) or the Examinations Officer, Katie Burgess ([k.burgess@baconscollege.co.uk](mailto:k.burgess@baconscollege.co.uk))

### **Can I study both History and Geography? Or both French and Spanish?**

It should be possible for you to take History and Geography or French and Spanish. As mentioned previously, choices should be rooted in a student's interests, the ability to be successful in that subject and because they may be needed for A-Level or degree study, or for a potential career path.

### **I have a particular talent (performing arts/ art and design/ sport) but I cannot take all the options I want to – why not?**

We strongly urge students to follow a broad and balanced curriculum so as to keep as many options open as possible. Things change and it would not make sense to make decisions at 14 that close off options later on – students may discover an aptitude or skill they had not demonstrated before. If there is a strong and compelling argument, we will, of course listen to it in your guidance meeting – it must be understood, however, that we also have a responsibility to ensure that students follow a broad and balanced curriculum.

### **I am a good 'all-rounder' and I am finding it hard to decide my option(s) – help!**

Keep your options open as much as possible – pick facilitating subjects and EBacc subjects and go with what you enjoy!



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