

Parents/carers comments and questions relating to Business Studies and/or Food Preparation and Nutrition courses not being offered to Year 10 pupils in September 2020

1. Does the Trust have teachers of other subjects who could teach it until you manage to find specialist teachers?

Pupils need to be taught by subject specialists as far as possible. We have been seeking to recruit teachers of Business Studies since July 2019 and teachers of Food Preparation and Nutrition since February. We had one Business Studies applicant in September 2019, who was appointed. Since that time we have received **no** applications who we have been able to interview.

It would be very unwise to start a course with no guarantee that specialist teachers will become available. This would be unfair to the pupils and indeed to parents/carers.

Similarly, we would feel it unwise to start a course with a long-term supply teacher, even if we could find one, in whom we had confidence. Supply teachers are casual employees who may leave at any moment. This simply would not offer pupils any certainty.

2. If a classroom is supervised, maybe recorded sessions for Business Studies can take place?

The principal problem is supply and demand. There are too few teachers of Business Studies available. Pupils need a subject specialist teacher who is able to plan in light of the needs of the pupils. Our own Business Studies teachers are already teaching the maximum number of lessons on their timetable. Therefore, it would not be possible for these individuals to take on additional groups remotely. We appreciate the idea being put forward, even though we do not believe it could work.

3. If you cannot make alternative arrangements for this subject to be offered to Year 10, please can you advise how this will effect pupils' futures interest in Business Studies.

Pupils wishing to study Business Studies courses at university are not required to have studied Business Studies previously in school. Most Higher Education Business Studies courses require students to have good qualifications in English and Mathematics at GCSE; some of the most prestigious universities will ask for Mathematics at A level or a Humanities subject at A level.

The current entry requirement at Kimberley College to study A level or BTEC Business asks either for a GCSE in Business Studies or an equivalent subject. We will update this by 2022 to make it very clear that Business Studies is not required. Other local Further Education providers do not require a Business Studies GCSE in order to study this at A Level or BTEC, but do require a grade 5 in Mathematics.

4. My child wants to set up their own company in the sports sector and they know they need Business Studies for this

We seek to ensure our pupils understand what skills are needed to run any successful business, or indeed to be successful in employment. These include communication, confidence, creativity, digital literacy, initiative, organisation, problem solving, resilience and teamwork. At Wootton Academy Trust the development of these core competencies is embedded into our careers curriculum making this clear to pupils throughout. Pupils will also develop these skills in all subjects and be able to transfer them into a business or other employment setting.

5. May I ask, if you can only offer some children Food Preparation and Nutrition, how you will prioritise the children?

If only some children are able to study Food Preparation and Nutrition we will put in place a process to select them. We will let parents/carers know what this process is; it could be to give higher priority to those children who put it as their first choice subject and so on. *Alternatively*, it may be fairer to hold a ballot. If parents/carers have a view, please let Mr Gleeson know. Before making a final decision we will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure the method proposed does not disadvantage any group of children.

6. If Business will not be offered at Wootton, can you advise if there are any external courses we can put our child on that are GCSE equivalents?

We will look into this for parents, but we would be worried about the impact on the learning and progress children would make in other subjects and their well-being overall by studying an additional subject. In any event, we would not be able to recommend a course.

7. Are there online tutorials you can put on during free periods?

Pupils do not have free periods in Years 9 – 11 in this school or indeed in other schools. We believe skills children would learn in the GCSE Business Studies course can be learnt in other subjects.

8. Are there external companies that can offer after school clubs/tuition/seminars?

Our Careers Department arranges visits to employers for all pupils.

During Year 10 all pupils visit at least one employer. Additionally, employers come into school to talk to pupils. Some companies run competitions which we will offer to pupils through the Student Bulletin.

There is a programme called Young Enterprise which enables young people to run their own business for a year with the support of a business adviser. In 2019-20, this programme was offered to students in Year 12 at Kimberley College, with two companies running throughout the academic year. In 2020-21, we hope to extend this offer to Year 10 pupils. We are also in discussions with Young Enterprise about other activities including employability workshops or challenges which could be run as part of our careers activity programme.

We also hold an annual Career Fair where there are employers from an increasing variety of employment sectors who talk to individual pupils about working in that sector.

9. In your letter you say that you need two Business Studies teachers and have shortlisted one for interview. If that person is successful will you be able to run a GCSE course for those students who have chosen it as an option?

Sadly, this will not be possible. We need to be appoint one teacher just to fulfil the number of lessons we need to teach children who will be in Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 next year.

10. How many GCSE classes would you normally run: assuming one each in North and South? If there are no further applicants but the one shortlisted teacher is successful, would the school be able to run one class at GCSE?

Sadly, this will not be possible. We need to be appoint one teacher just to fulfil the number of lessons we need to teach children who will be in Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 next year.

Business Studies has always been a popular option; in any year there are between four and six classes of Business Studies. Few teacher training organizations train teachers of Business Studies; this is because they find it very difficult to recruit people who wish to teach the subject.

11. Would I be correct in assuming that the new cohort of Year 9's due to start in September will not be offered Business Studies as an option?

This is correct. Business Studies will not be offered to Year 9 children in 2020 – 2021.

12. Our child wants us to seek advice on whether there are other schools available which offer Business Studies and Food Preparation and Nutrition subjects they so badly want to take.

This is an extreme measure and most schools face exactly the same recruitment challenges as Wootton Academy Trust experiences. We will continue to do everything we can to recruit great teachers.

13. If the decision has to be taken by the school to remove it from the curriculum can you advise what will happen about the option choices of those students affected. My child put two reserve subjects down, however they were specifically as an alternative to two other of their option choices and not to replace Business Studies.

We ask pupils to select two reserve subjects in case they cannot do one or more of their subjects. Therefore, we would expect to substitute one of the reserve choices children have already made. If your child wishes to request an alternative reserve subject they, or you, should email Mr Freemantle – gfreemantle@wootton.beds.sch.uk

14. Will the students and their parents/carers be given the opportunity to look at the option choices again to ensure they will be studying the right mix of subjects at GCSE?

We ask pupils to select two reserve subjects in case they cannot do one or more of their subjects. Therefore, we would expect to substitute one of the reserve choices children have already made. Members of the Senior Leadership Team, including our two Vice Principals, review the option choices of all children to ensure they are balanced and sensible. If your child wishes to request an alternative reserve subject they, or you, should email Mr Freemantle – gfreemantle@wootton.beds.sch.uk

15. Have you considered contacting Cranfield management school regarding whether some staff there wish to teach business studies on a PT basis? Perhaps something to consider?

We have close links with Cranfield University and we will approach the university to discuss this suggestion. Thank you.

16. Might it be possible to offer an after school course, either at GCSE or BTEC in Business Studies?

We will consider this as a solution if we cannot recruit a specialist teacher. However, we know some children may not be able to access this provision because they would not be able to get home afterwards.

17. Food Preparation and Nutrition was the only option my child was absolutely 100% interested in doing. My child wants to go into teaching and this would be a great GCSE to do. When will we know who has been allocated a place or not?

We share your disappointment. We have a great Food Technology teacher who has made Food one of our most popular subjects. We simply cannot find a second teacher to join this teacher to enable the subject to grow further. If we cannot find a second qualified Food teacher, children's GCSE grades at the end of Year 11 would be low which would limit their progression opportunities into their future careers.

The latest date teachers are able to resign from their current schools is May 31. Therefore, if we have not been able to appoint a second Food teacher by that date, it is very unlikely that we will find somebody after that date. Therefore, we would expect to be able to confirm options for all children in June.

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Wootton Academy Trust operates:
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Kimberley 16-19 STEM College
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