

# KS4 Options

Guidance for parents, carers and  
students

2025-2027

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Wootton  
Upper School

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# Introduction

Making curriculum choices in Year 9 is a very important part of your time in school; it is an opportunity for you to take control of your education and shape the way you want your future to be. The options you choose for Years 10 and 11 will affect how you spend your time at school for the next two years. Your choices may also influence what course or training you are able to do after Year 11.

It is important to choose subjects that will interest and motivate you. Think about what you enjoy doing, what keeps you interested in something and what makes you work hard. Remember that you are not alone in making these decisions; everyone in Year 9 is going through the same process. Teachers, friends, parents, carers and family will be able to guide, advise and support you in this important decision-making process.

All pupils continue in education or training until the age of 18. This means that you will remain at school, go to college, or be working in employment, **with appropriate training**, until July 2029. After that, many pupils will continue to study for degrees or higher/degree level apprenticeships at university or in college.

You need to look further ahead than GCSE in your planning. Many of you will be aspiring to go to university or planning to complete a degree apprenticeship; therefore, you need to be aware of which subjects you might be expected to have studied at GCSE and at A Level. Some universities may prefer pupils to have a Modern Foreign Language and either Geography or History at GCSE. A website '[Informed Choices](#)' brings together guidance from admissions teams at Russell Group universities to give pupils clear information about the subjects they should consider if they are hoping to progress to a competitive university. A link to this website is available on the school website and on page 13 of this booklet. You can view degree apprenticeship vacancies on the national '*find an apprenticeship*' website in order to research any subject specific requirements for opportunities at this level. You can also search for degree courses and apprenticeships on **Unifrog** using your personal log in. This will show entry requirements including required subjects.

Please read the subject information sheets available on the school's website ([www.woottonupper.co.uk](http://www.woottonupper.co.uk) > **Curriculum > KS4 Options**) and also look at other information from other sources.

# How do I make my options choices?

When making your KS4 options it is important that you take time to consider a range of different factors that might influence your decisions. Firstly, it is very important that you spend time reading through this options booklet and familiarise yourself with all the relevant information.

## **What subjects do you enjoy?**

Remember that you are more likely to do well in an options subject if it is something that you enjoy, but also make sure that you understand exactly what the course is about, including its content, and how it is assessed.

## **What subjects do you excel in?**

Alongside enjoying a subject, you should also think about how well you have been doing in the subject. This isn't the 'be-all and end-all', but you should give your current grades and predictions some thought when making your options. Speak to your teachers about whether they feel that you will be suited to a GCSE or vocational course in their subject.

## **What skills will be required in each of the subjects I choose?**

It's important to think about what skills you will need to succeed in each subject. Remember that all subjects call upon different talents and skills, and some subjects will require significantly different skills to others. For example, GCSE PE requires more physical and practical skills than GCSE geography; whilst GCSE geography has a higher amount of reading and writing as part of the course.

## **What topics will I learn about in each subject?**

You need to read through the subject content of all of the options subjects carefully and make sure that you understand exactly what you will be taught (e.g. don't assume that GCSE history will be all about WWII!)

## **What ideas have you got for your future career?**

At this stage, you might not know what you want to do after school, or you may have a very firm idea. Whatever the case, it's worth giving your future career some thought now and think about whether any qualifications you take now might help you in the future. There is more advice on careers planning later in this booklet. Do you aspire towards university in the future? You might be thinking about university education in the next few years, so giving some thought towards possible courses in the future can help. Many universities consider the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) to be an important measure of how well students are doing before coming to university. You can find more information on the EBacc later in this booklet.

Other things to remember, you should not make your decision based on who you think (or hope!) might be teaching you – all of your teachers are brilliant, but you should not pick a subject because you get on with a particular member of staff. Your KS4 teachers may be completely new to you. Also, don't choose an option just because your friend is studying the subject. Remember that you should choose a subject based on you.

# How do KS4 qualifications work?

## KS4 Qualification grading structure

- GCSEs are graded 9 to 1, with 9 being the top grade.
- Vocational qualifications (BTECs) use Pass/Merit/Distinction/Distinction\* grading system. This is directly comparable with the 9-1 GCSE grading system.

GCSE Grading	Vocational qualification Grade	9-1 Equivalent
9	Level 2 Distinction *	8.5
8		
7	Level 2 Distinction	7
6		
5	Level 2 Merit	5.5
4	Level 2 Pass	4
3		
2	Level 1 Distinction	3
1	Level 1 Merit	2
U	Level 1 Pass	1.25

Assessment is mainly by exam, with other types of assessment used only where needed to test essential subject skills, for example, in Drama there is a performance assessment.

### Greater content

Current GCSE courses have more content than was the case in the past. Also, there is an increased expectation that young people remember content and can apply it to a wide range of question types and sometimes surprising contexts in exams.

### Two-year courses with assessment at the end of the course

GCSE are intended for study over two years and are no longer divided into different modules. Pupils must take all their exams in one period at the end of their course.

### What are BTECs courses?

BTECs are vocationally related qualifications, where learners develop knowledge and understanding by applying their learning and skills in a work-related context. They engage young learners in taking responsibility for their own learning and develop essential work-related skills, such as working to deadlines and presenting information effectively.

BTECs are mainly assessed through in-class controlled assessments which are marked and moderated internally, before being sent off for external moderation. A BTEC Tech Award is equivalent to one GCSE.

BTEC qualifications may suit pupils who are organised, driven and like working independently. They may suit pupils who prefer coursework-style assessment instead of written exams.

# What is the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)?

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a performance measure, not a qualification. It is not compulsory, but the measure shows where students have secured a grade 4 (standard pass) or above across specific academic subjects at Key Stage 4 and is designed to enable parents/carers and students to see how the school is performing in comparison to other schools.

Universities, colleges and employers also use this measure as a gauge of a student's performance in a range of key academic subjects, and as such we recommend that all students consider choosing options that will allow them to achieve the English Baccalaureate.

The English Baccalaureate consists of the following subjects:

- English (language and literature)
- Mathematics
- the Sciences (combined or separate) or Computer Science
- Geography or History
- a foreign language (at Wootton this is French or Spanish)

Students must gain a grade 4 or above in one subject from each of the areas, in order to achieve the English Baccalaureate performance measure. Core subjects are taken by all students at Wootton, so in order to achieve the English Baccalaureate students must also choose a humanities subject (geography or history) and a language (French or Spanish).

Our aim is such that each pupil can follow a personalised learning plan which is both broad and balanced both in terms of the range of subjects they study and also with regards to the type of qualification and the learning style involved.

The EBacc is one measure of pupils following a broad and balanced curriculum. However, we believe that the arts, design and technology and other subjects are also just as important in achieving this balance.

# The Core Curriculum

All students at Wootton Upper School follow a core curriculum consisting of the following GCSE subjects:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Combined Science (double award)

As well as:

- PE (non-examined)
- Philosophy, Religion & Ethics - PRE (non-examined)

In English, pupils will complete two separate courses: GCSE **English Language** and GCSE **English Literature**. The assessment is examination based and will be completed at the end of Year 11.

All pupils will study GCSE **Mathematics** with the examination at the end of Year 11.

All pupils study **Combined Science**, studying Biology, Chemistry and Physics modules, which leads to two GCSE grades.

**Separate Science** leads to three separate GCSE grades, and the extra science modules are taught during an option block. Separate Science extends your knowledge of science topics and is a great option if you are looking to study sciences to a higher level (i.e. University).

**To follow the Separate Science pathway, you will need to select this as one of your 'option' choices. In order to follow this, you should be a competent mathematician as there is a significant increase in maths-based content in these courses. This means that you should currently be in Maths sets 1-2. You do not need to have studied Separate Science to study Biology, Chemistry or Physics at A-Level. We will only run a certain number of classes for Separate Science.**

PSHE (Personal, Social, Health & Economic) education remains obligatory for all pupils. PSHE includes sessions on Careers Education and some additional Citizenship topics.

All pupils will continue to follow PE and Philosophy, Religion & Ethics (PRE). However, pupils have a choice if they wish to follow PRE as an examination course.

# Option subjects

We offer a wide range of subjects at Key Stage 4 and students are asked to **select four options**. The subjects are arranged in blocks and students must select one from each block. Students will be asked to rank these in order of preference. They are also asked to provide back-up choices, and again asked to place these in rank order of preference.

**One of your four subjects must include Geography or History.**

- Geography (GCSE)
- History (GCSE)
- Business (GCSE)
- Computer Science (GCSE)
- IT (BTEC)
- 3D Design (Art and Design)
- Art (GCSE)
- Graphics (GCSE)
- Textile Design (GCSE)
- Creative Media (BTEC)
- Food (GCSE)
- French (GCSE)
- PE (GCSE)
- Dance (GCSE)
- Philosophy, Religion & Ethics (GCSE)
- Drama (GCSE)
- Separate Science - Biology, Chemistry and Physics (GCSE)
- Music (GCSE)
- Spanish (GCSE) - *(You must have followed this in Year 9 or be a fluent speaker of Spanish)*

Of these subjects, you may **only select one** of the following subjects:

- 3D Design (Art and Design)
- Art
- Graphics
- Textile Design

The basis for this is that all four of these subjects are GCSE Art & Design courses where aspects of specification are common across all subjects.

To select **Separate Science**, you should be an able mathematician, currently in Maths sets 1-3. Also, you should have achieved a high score in your recent Science assessment.

To select **Computer Science**, you should be an able mathematician, currently in Maths sets 1-3

Details of all the subjects on offer are available on the Wootton Upper School website:

[www.woottonupper.co.uk](http://www.woottonupper.co.uk) > Curriculum > KS4 Options.



## Priority order

When selecting your main (and reserve) choices, you will be asked to place them in a rank order so that your favourite is at the top of the list. This will aid us to allocate subjects as we will endeavour to assign as many of the highest priority subjects as possible.

### Please note:

We will do our utmost to fit all students into their preferred choices, but this cannot be guaranteed. That is why it is important that students provide back-up choices, in rank order. Where we have been unable to allocate a first choice, we will work down the rank order list and allocate to the first available subject. The reasons a student may not get their first choice include:

- Insufficient numbers for the class to run – too few students have opted for the subject. If the subject is being run in another block, we will look to move block choices to accommodate. If it is not, then we will use the back-up choices.
- Oversubscription – too many students have opted for the subject. The number of spaces in each subject is decided using the maximum class sizes set by the headteacher and governors. In this case we will look at students' priority order of subjects. If there are students that we are unable to accommodate at this point will look at their reserve subjects.
- Some practical subjects will have smaller class sizes than other subjects. When there are too many students opting for the number of spaces available, we will look at students' priority order of subjects and their overall curriculum balance. If there are students that we are unable to accommodate at this point will look at their reserve subjects. If necessary, we will use a random selection process that will be overseen by two senior members of staff to ensure fairness.
- Unforeseen staffing changes - rarely, a staffing change may mean that a subject has to be withdrawn from the option blocks. If this happens, we will use reserve choices.
- Late submission of online options form - if we do not receive an options form by the deadline published, a first choice cannot be considered if it is for an oversubscribed subject. Reserve choices will be used.

To accommodate as many main choices as possible, it may be necessary for some students to change populations as they move into Year 10.

# How to make the right choices

Making choices for your GCSEs is difficult. There are very few people who are sure about exactly what they want to take, likewise very few people know what career they wish to pursue. However, even at this stage, it is wise to consider the future, starting with your A Levels.

Deciding what is best for you depends on what subjects you enjoy studying. If you are unsure what subjects to choose, remember that balance and breadth are important. It is also wise to speak to your subject teachers; they will be able to provide you with an insight into the course and help you decide whether that subject is right for you.

Very often pupils are sure about some subjects, but still have to make a difficult decision between one or two others: Should I take separate sciences? Should I continue with both Modern Languages? Do I choose Geography or History or both?

You should find that most careers and companies do not mind which GCSEs you take but are more interested in the grades you achieve. The compulsory subjects of Mathematics and English are required by universities and employers.

Take some time to think carefully about your choices before you decide.

Ask yourself the following important questions:

- **Do I enjoy the subject?**  
You are more likely to do well at subjects you really enjoy and at which you are more successful.
- **Do I intend to choose particular subjects because I like my present teachers?**  
You may not have the same teacher next year, so this is not a sound reason for your choice.
- **Do I wish to do the same subjects as my friends so that I will be in a group with them next year?**  
Again, because of the timetable and the numbers of groups, you may find you are no longer with current friends even if you have made the same choices.
- **Will my choices help me in the future, even if I do not know what I want to do?**  
Our Careers Adviser is available for drop-in sessions for any pupils who wish to discuss their options and how these relate to future career ideas. Please email [careers@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:careers@wootton.beds.sch.uk) if you require more information.
- **Can I change my mind after I have completed my options form?**  
If you change your mind before the deadline, please log back onto the online system and make your changes.  
If the deadline has passed, we will place a form on the website where pupils (in conjunction with their parents) may request a change. However, once the timetable has been written and decisions made about the number of classes there will be in each subject, it is very unlikely that we will be able to accommodate further changes. We will consider any changes where possible but if groups are at capacity, then we may not be able to accommodate the request.

# Careers guidance and support

When making choices, we encourage students try to keep their options open as opinions over careers often change over time. It is important to consider where Level 2 qualifications (such as GCSEs) may lead in the future, as all students are expected to stay in education until they are 18 years old, and there are several pathways that students may choose for post-16 education.

## **A-levels**

Students may opt to attend a post-16 college offering A-levels. Students typically study three A-level courses at college, some of which may be a continuation of subjects studied at GCSE or may be completely new. At A-level, students narrow their academic focus, and this can lead to more specific career pathways involving further qualifications such as university degrees. It is important to note that any subject that is 'dropped' at GCSE is often considered to be more difficult to opt for at A-level, as GCSE education provides a foundation of knowledge for the qualification (e.g. a student choosing not to study GCSE history may find it harder to then opt for A-level history at a sixth form college). Subjects that are 'new' to a student (e.g. A-level law) will often make allowances for the fact that a GCSE option may not have been available.

## **Vocational qualifications**

Students may opt to study a specific, vocational qualification at a post-16 college at either Level 2 or Level 3. There are a wide range of vocational qualifications including BTECs, OCR Cambridge Nationals and CACHE courses. These courses typically lead to a specific career or job and may involve an element of work placement or practical experience. Students do not necessarily have to complete a Level 2 vocational qualification to take a Level 3 vocational course at a post-16 college, however specific careers pathways can require this.

## **Apprenticeships**

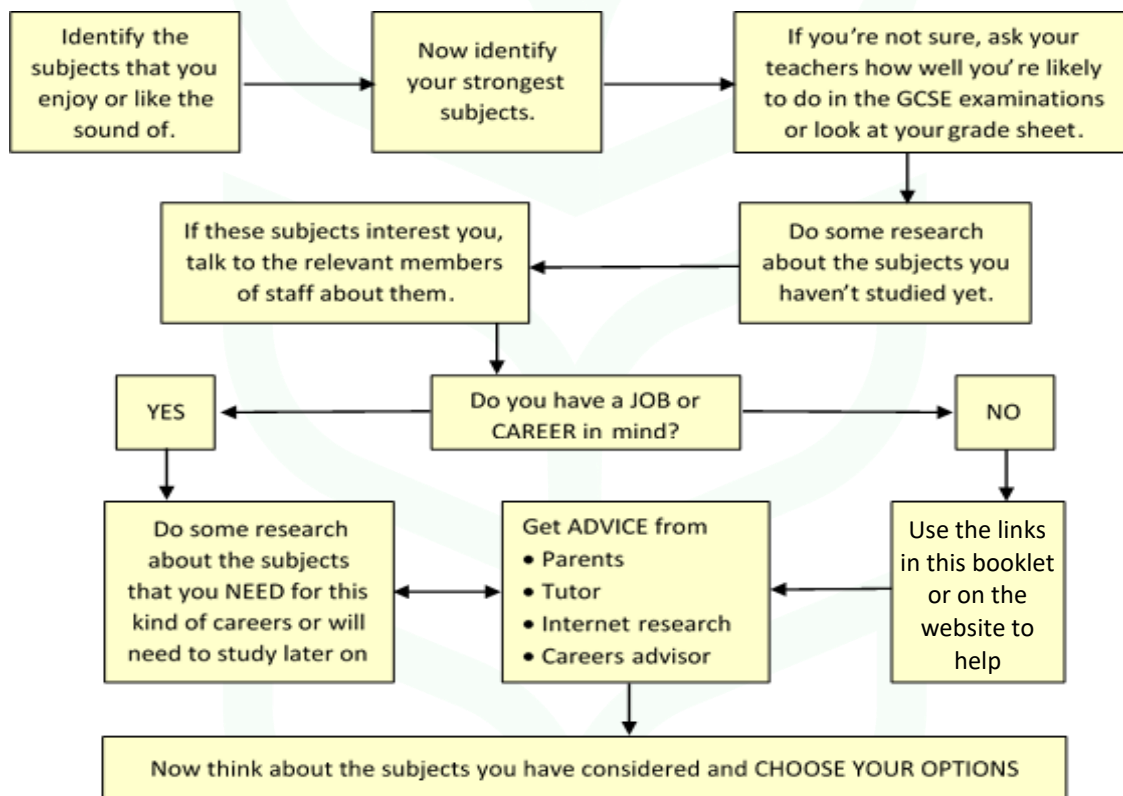
Students may wish to take a 'work-based' route for their post-16 education and apply for an apprenticeship with an employer. Apprenticeships are varied, but usually pay a basic salary to students for their work and will then educate the student in that line of work, which can include the passing of specific qualifications for the role.

## Where can I get more information?

Use some of the links below to get more information:

- [Unifrog](#) – log in using your personal log in, a parent log in is also available. Look at careers information, search for apprenticeships and university courses and much more
- [BBC Bitesize](#) - a resource which links subjects you enjoy to careers
- The [National Careers Service](#) provides an online service where you can search for individual jobs and careers and find out their typical qualification requirements alongside other key information.
- For students considering university education, the Russell Group of universities has produced [a guide](#) to help students understand what degrees might be open to them based on their Level 3 choices.
- [iCould](#) - Take a look at careers videos, job profile and articles. Focus on 14.
- Help and advice for your creative career: <https://discovercreative.careers/#/>
- [Apprenticeships](#): Interested in finding out about entry requirements for apprenticeships? Look at live vacancies here
- [UCAS](#): Search for University courses and their entry requirements
- [Prospects - What can I do with a degree in .....:](#)
- [Career Pilot](#) - Learn more about your choices at age 14.

Details of all the subjects on offer and copies of the Options materials are available on the Wootton Upper School website: [www.woottonupper.co.uk](http://www.woottonupper.co.uk) > Curriculum > KS4 Options



# Option Blocks

Option choices will be submitted via the online system (please see the guide with further instructions)

You will need to select **ONE subject from each block.**

- One of your choices must be Geography or History
- Only one of: 3D Design, Art, Graphics and Textile Design may be chosen as a main subject.

Option Block A	Option Block B	Option Block C	Option Block D
Geography	Geography	Geography	Geography
History	History	History	History
3D Design	Art	Business	3D Design
Art	Business	Creative Media (BTEC)	IT (BTEC)
Business	Creative Media (BTEC)	Food	PE
Computer Science	Computer Science	French	Separate Science
Dance	Drama		
Drama	Food		
Graphics	Graphics		
IT (BTEC)	Music		
PE	PRE		
PRE	Textile Design		
Spanish			

**Main choices** (Only one subject from each option block)

Rank Order	Block	Subject
1		
2		
3		
4		

**Reserve choices** (Only one subject from each option block)

Rank Order	Block	Subject
1		
2		
3		
4		

Reserve choices - Please do not duplicate any of the choices you have put as main choices.

# What's next?

You will complete your option choices using an online system from SIMS.

**Students will receive an email invitation sent to their school email account** ([www.office.com](http://www.office.com)).

(Parents/carers will not receive any log on details for this system)

Students MUST accept this invitation via their email to access the system.

Please see the guide on the website with more details (and examples) of how to access the system.

Once the initial registration/set up is complete, the system can then be accessed via:

[www.sims-options.co.uk](http://www.sims-options.co.uk) where students will log in using their Microsoft365 details (as they do in class)

## Sign in to SIMS Options



(student email address – [username@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:username@wootton.beds.sch.uk))

**The deadline for completing the online system is Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

If you have any concerns, then please contact:

Mr G. Freemantle

[options@wootton.beds.sch.uk](mailto:options@wootton.beds.sch.uk)