

A Level Course Guide



Maru-a-Pula 2019

Why Maru-a-Pula?

Since its foundation in 1972 Maru-a-Pula has developed an excellent track record in producing well rounded students who have gained access to top tier universities. Our alumni have gone on to a huge variety of careers, from human rights activists to the Director of Finance at Facebook, and from entrepreneurs to professors, and even the occasional president.

Maru-a-Pula runs one of the largest A Level programmes on the continent. Due to a combination of high quality teaching, hardworking students, and partnerships with various agencies, MaP has achieved unrivalled success both in terms of academic grades and university placement. More than 90 students currently attend the world's top 100 ranked institutions. These include students at Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton, etc.

In addition to academics, Maru-a-Pula has not lost sight of its mission to help develop the nation of Botswana. This is aided by an extensive afternoon co-curricular programme that allows students to serve the community in numerous ways. Some notable successes in recent years have been providing solar lighting to a remote village, working with refugees at the Dukwi Camp, and becoming a blood donation centre for the Ministry of Health.

MaP also offers a wide range of sports. Students compete locally in both private and government school leagues as well as travelling internationally. We consider it essential that students continue to enjoy opportunities outside of the classroom.

While we do set internal targets (60% A/A* at A Level, 50% of students attending top 100 universities in the US/UK, etc.), our main goal is always to produce happy students who will gain admission to the most suitable university for them, doing the course of their choice.

Why A Levels?

A Levels are one of the world's most widely recognized university entrance qualifications and allow access to further education on any continent, with the probable exception of Antarctica!

By allowing applicants to choose four subjects, students can concentrate on their strengths while maintaining sufficient breadth so as not to close off future career options. The standard of work is challenging, yet interesting, and helps develop the necessary skill set for successful university study.

The split between AS and A Level allows those students who wish to study in South Africa to leave for university after the first year.

How do A Levels Work?

During the first year all students are expected to do four subjects. These are known as AS Level and students receive a certificate after sitting their external exams in Term 3. The grades for each subject range from A to E. A limited number of countries, notably South Africa, will accept students into university with AS grades.

The vast majority of students will return for their second year, known as A2. Some students will drop to three subjects, as this is what universities require, while others will choose to continue with the four they completed at AS. At the end of the year they will sit their final exams and then receive their A Level certificates. The grades range from A* to E and are awarded on the student's cumulative performance at AS and A2, with equal weighting between the two sets of exams.

It is important to note that there is no benefit to doing five subjects and we do not allow students to be entered for five exams. It is much better for students to develop or apply interests outside of the classroom.

How to Choose Your Subjects

The choice of subjects can be a difficult one for many students. However, you should use the following, in order of importance, to come to a decision:

1. Choose the subjects you enjoy.
2. Choose the subjects you are best at – many subjects require an A at IGCSE.
3. Talk to your teachers – they will be very honest with you.
4. Do not choose a subject because your parents think it is a good idea!
5. Look at what universities require – sometimes it might not be what you think.
6. Make an appointment to see our Careers and Guidance Counsellor, Ms Jobson.

It is really important that students are given the chance to follow the subjects they are most passionate about. Universities are often more concerned with the final grades obtained rather than the subjects in which they were awarded. The only real exceptions to this are the Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

We endeavour to meet all the requests for subject choices, but sometimes unusual subject combinations are difficult to timetable. However, we do try our best to meet students' wishes and over the past three years we have had a success rate of around 98%!

While we offer Business and Economics as separate subjects we do not allow students to take both. This is based on advice from universities who prefer to see a wider range of options.

What do Universities Want?

The following give a rough guide of entrance requirements by country. However, it is vital that you do research on individual institutions as each university has its own preferences to subjects etc.

South Africa

To study in South Africa students must achieve results that qualify for a Conditional Matric Exemption Certificate. This means four D's at AS Level plus IGCSE First Language English. Individual universities will require much higher AS grades for specific subjects, but will not require A2. Students with a pass in French or another language at IGCSE will qualify for a full Matric Exemption certificate, but this makes little difference to international students.

United Kingdom

Three good grades at A Level and lots of money! Usually there is no need for students with IGCSE First Language who have been taught in English to do any additional language tests – though medical students might be asked. Medical students will also have to sit UKCAT or BMAT medical exams. While some schools might offer small scholarships, these rarely exceed 10% of the total tuition fees.

United States

Top-tier universities almost always require the full A Level. In addition, they will normally require students to sit SATs. Though some universities do offer financial aid it is often not as generous as you would think, meaning that prices are often on a par (if not more expensive) than the UK. The exceptions to this are for truly outstanding students or those with exceptional background stories.

Netherlands/Europe

Usually require the full A Level. Costs vary throughout Europe, often with different rates for EU citizens that are very affordable – in some cases free. However, even for non-citizens there are some bargains to be had. Many countries offer courses taught in English.

Canada

Many Canadian universities used to accept AS students, but in recent times the top-tier institutions have changed their policy and now require the full A Level.

Rest of the World

Most countries will require the full two year A Level programme. The only notable exceptions being Russia and China who will accept AS or even IGCSE.

Common Career Paths and Choices

Some courses at university have strict requirements about which subjects they would like to see students having completed. However, many other courses are very flexible with their A Level requirements. For instance, in the UK there are usually no set requirements (except good grades!) for courses such as Business, Psychology, Law, etc.

The following list is a rough guide as to what courses previous students have gone on to do and the requirements they needed to meet. Please remember you must check with individual universities to see exactly what they require.

Engineering – Maths, Physics + 1 other. Note that Canadian universities require at least AS Chemistry for all engineering courses. Art could be very useful, at least at AS.

Medicine – Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biology at AS and then three of these at A2. Oddly, some universities (not all) prefer Physics, Maths, and Chemistry to Biology at A2.

Law – No set requirements although some universities prefer essay and analytical subjects such as English and History.

Business – Varies from course to course. Some prefer Maths and Sciences, others prefer History and English and only require Maths at IGCSE. Business or Economics are good choices but are often not requirements. Lots of research needed!

Finance – Similar to Business. It is notable that not all finance courses require Maths. Economics is often helpful but rarely a requirement.

Sciences/Maths – Maths plus the Science in which you are interested.

Actuarial Science – Maths is a must, Physics or Economics would be helpful.

History – History plus another two.

Psychology – Usually there are no set requirements, but depending on the course AS Maths (Statistics is useful for many of the humanities!) and/or Biology might be useful.

Geology/Mining – Maths and Chemistry usually required, Geography could be very useful.

Architecture – Maths, Physics often required. Chemistry and Art could be useful.

Design – Art plus two others

Computer Science – Maths is often the only requirement. Obviously Computer Science would be useful as would Physics. Possibly Art for those interested in graphics.

Please note that with the exception of Medicine it is very unusual for a course to specify more than two specific subjects that they require, although they will require three different A Levels. This gives students the chance to keep a wide range of subjects and to choose the subjects that they really enjoy.

Applications and Timeline

The process starts at the beginning of Form 5 and runs throughout the year.

- January – A quick briefing about A Levels and what to think about.
- February – Initial Information Evening for Parents
- June – Students give their initial choices to the Director of A Level. These are non-binding and are used to set up the subject blocks for the timetable and to plan class sizes.
- July/August – Students sit their IGCSE Mock Exams.
- September – Open evening where parents and students can talk to the A Level departments and see which subjects would be best for them.
- September 30th – Deadline for MaP applicants.
- October 31st – Deadline for external applicants.
- January – IGCSE results are released.

6th Form Orientation usually starts the day following the publication of the IGCSE results. At this time students can change their subject choices based on their results. The school may also require a change of subjects. For those students who do not meet the requirements we set up urgent meetings with the Careers and Guidance Counsellor to ensure that they gain access to a more suitable course.

The School Day and Expectations

The A Level programme is designed to be a bridging programme between Form 5 and university and as such students are given a little more freedom. This is to help prepare them for both the academic and social aspects of leaving Maru-a-Pula for the big wide world!

Work/Homework

A Levels are a big step up from IGCSE and this is reflected in the workload. Students usually need to spend at least two hours on independent study each day.

Understanding

Cramming for exams is no longer an option at A Level. Success will depend upon in depth understanding of the course material. This means that at the end of every day students must understand everything that was covered that morning. How to do this? Keep up with homework, start revising from day 1, read ahead in the textbook, use study groups. Most importantly, work hard during the morning lessons and make full use of the teachers' knowledge by asking questions. There are also many Tutorials offered during the afternoon.

Tutors

Tutors should almost never be needed at A Level – there are not enough hours in the day to fit them in! Students should learn to make the best use of their teachers and course materials. We have found that tutors often lead to lazy students who do little during the morning programme and this is nearly always reflected in their grades.

Uniform

We like to give our students the chance to find their identity before they leave to university and this includes developing their own fashion style. However, while we have no uniform at A Level we do expect students to be sensibly dressed. As we have so many universities visit MaP, the guideline we give to students is that they should always be dressed in a way that they would be happy to meet an admissions officer!

Punctuality and Attendance

Due to the intensive nature of the course it is vital that students miss the absolute minimum number of lessons – it is very hard to catch up. Likewise, punctuality is essential and all students should be at school for 7 am. Statistics on attendance appear on students' reports and are often required by universities.

Behaviour

Fortunately, this is an area that rarely has to be addressed. However, despite their extra freedom, students need to recognise that ordinary school rules still apply to them.

Alternatives to A Level

While A Levels offer an excellent route to university, for a variety of reasons they might not be the best choice for everyone. Here are some of the common alternatives.

University of Botswana/ Botswana International University of Science & Technology

These are cheap (for citizens), are open to students with just IGCSE, and can be excellent choices for certain subjects. For example, students wishing to study Law are usually advised to go to UB.

Botswana Accountancy College

Offer a range of Business and Computing courses.

SA Matric Courses

For some students who will struggle with the academic rigour of A Level courses like those offered by Abbots in South Africa may be useful. These are one-year Matric courses and can lead to entry to SA universities.

SA Universities of Technology (formerly Technikons)

These offer Certificate and Diploma courses for applicants with IGCSE. Progressions to degree level qualification is possible.

Foundation/Bridging Courses (UK, Australia, Canada)

For students with a narrow field of interest, bridging courses can offer a good alternative to having to study four AS subjects. These are subject specific (e.g. Business) and often feed in to that university's undergraduate courses. The downside is cost and a lack of flexibility. They are usually as expensive as a full year at university and do not lead to a qualification that is transferable to another university. Having said that, if a student is passionate about what they want to study they can offer good value for money.

USA Community Colleges

These are two year colleges offering a wide range of programmes with a guaranteed transfer to the 3rd or 4th year of a partner university if a minimum GPA (Grade Point Average) is achieved.

Russia/China

Many Russian universities offer heavily discounted (usually 80% off) fees for Botswana residents. They will take students straight from IGCSE and offer a range of courses in both Russian and English.

Scholarships

Every year there are a small number of scholarship opportunities for students who have just completed their IGCSE/BGCSE's. Opportunities are occasionally given by the governments of China, Russia, and Cuba. These are often for specific courses and are taught in the host language. Other scholarships include the United World Colleges which offer places at their IB Schools. We alert students to these possibilities as we are made aware, but a good source of information is the Botswana Student Network Facebook page.

For more information on any of the above please see Ms Jobson (jb@maruapula.org).

Our Vision

To be one of Africa's leading institutions, where students are educated to excel and to be passionate and creative leaders who serve their communities.

Our Mission

Maru-a-Pula is a dynamic world-class school rooted in Botswana. We offer a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for entry to highly selective universities, to pursue challenging careers and self-fulfilment. Through programmes emphasizing self-discipline and community service, each student learns personal and social responsibility. We encourage our students to exercise leadership that is compassionate, democratic and tolerant.

Our Values

Maru-a-Pula's education is based on:

- academic excellence that promotes ethical inquiry and informed choices;
- student-centred approaches to learning, which nurture creativity;
- developing confidence, self-reliance and self-esteem;
- valuing all members in a sensitive, multicultural, international community;
- promoting democracy and a sense of responsibility to our community;
- promoting a respect for the environment;
- the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds through our bursary, scholarship and orphan programmes.

Accounting 9706

Course requirements: At least a B in IGCSE Accounting or equivalent

Outline

The A Level Accounting syllabus is based on a combination of financial and managerial accounting. The AS programme gives an introduction to accounting theory and practice and expands their application to a range of accounting situations. It provides an understanding of accounting principles and techniques applicable to the business environment. The A2 component incorporates a greater depth of knowledge across a wide range of business situations. It provides an excellent foundation for further study of accountancy at pre-professional and professional levels.

Is it for you?

Students require a genuine love of numbers, an interest in the business world and a real passion for accountancy. It should be noted that it is not a requirement for any university course, though if you are interested it would be of great benefit in many areas.

Major Topics Covered

Financial Accounting

Cost and Management Accounting

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Multiple choice questions) 1 hour (30% of AS grade), Paper 2 (Structured questions) 1 hour 30 min (70% of AS grade)

A2: Paper 4 (Structured questions) 3 hours (50% of A Level grade)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Though not needed for any Business or Accounting degree, it is favoured by local institutions. It is never a requirement for universities in the UK/US.

Useful for: Candidates wishing to pursue careers in business management and/or accountancy.

Not required for: It is not a requirement for any university course, including Accountancy.

Art and Design 9479

Course requirements: A/A* at Cambridge O Level or Cambridge IGCSE Art, or the equivalent. Alternatively, a passion for art and a portfolio of work showing the ability to cope at this level.

Outline

This course provides opportunities for learners to develop their personal practice, enrich their understanding of key concepts and improve their practical skills in a wide range of traditional and contemporary techniques. It allows learners to explore and build on their interests. The syllabus encourages independent expression and the development of a critical, reflective practice. It is designed to accommodate a wide range of abilities, materials and resources, and allows the different skills of students (and teachers!) to be fully exploited. It offers a lot of freedom but also has very high expectations and demands. Students can specialise in Fine Art, Graphic Communication or Three Dimensional Design.

Is it for you?

Students need the ability to cope with a large amount of course work. Given the freedom in this course it should be enjoyable and a pleasure, but if the passion is not there it can be daunting. Students need good communication and research skills – the need to be able to show the processes behind their work and not just produce a good final piece.

Assessment

AS: Component 1 (Coursework) Candidates research, develop and realise a project from one area of study in the syllabus. It consists of a portfolio and a final product (50% of the AS grade). Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment) consists of a 6 weeks preparation time and a 15 hour exam (50% of the AS grade).

A2: Component 3 (Personal Investigation) Candidates investigate a theme, idea, concept or process that is personal to them. This involves practical work and a 1000-1500 word essay (50% of the A Level grade)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Art degrees, Graphic Design, Fashion Design, some Architecture degrees

Useful for: Any field that has a visual communication or design element. This is especially true for Engineering, Marketing, etc.

Not required for: Most degrees.

Biology 9700

Course requirements: A/A* at Cambridge O Level or Cambridge IGCSE course, or the equivalent, in Biology or in Dual/Co-ordinated Science.

Outline

The main concepts in AS/A Level Biology are: Cells as the unit of life, Biochemical processes, DNA – the molecule of heredity, Genetics, Biotechnology, Natural selection and Evolution, Organisms in their environment and Observation and investigation. If mastered, students can use the concepts to solve problems or to understand unfamiliar subject-related material.

Is it for you?

An ideal student should not have found IGCSE Biology particularly challenging. Candidates must be able to recall and explain concepts and use principles that are within the syllabus and apply them in a logical, reasoned or deductive manner to a new situation.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Multiple choice questions) 1 hour (40 Marks), Paper 2 (Structured questions) 1 hour 15 min (60 Marks), Paper 3 (Practical) 2 hours (40 Marks)

A2: Paper 4 (Structured questions) 2 hours (100 Marks), Paper 5 (Planning, Analysis and Evaluation) 1 hour 15 min (30 Marks)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Fields that often require A Level Biology include Medicine, Biomedical engineering, Biotechnology, Medicinal chemistry, Microbiology, Nanotechnology, Pharmacology, Veterinary Studies, Dentistry.

Useful for: Medicine (even though A2 is not always a requirement). Any person going into health or wildlife/animal fields – even if it is on the business side. Engineering – can give an insight into how the natural world has solved problems.

Not required for: Business and Finance courses, Humanities, ICT courses and most engineering courses.

Business 9609

Course requirements: At least a B in IGCSE Business or equivalent. Students with a strong academic background who have not done IGCSE Business may be considered on a case by case basis.

Outline

The course looks at how Businesses operate at every level, from organisation and recruitment through to the social and economic impact of private and public sector enterprises. Students will learn about marketing and production and will look at the legal, ethical and social constraints upon businesses and finance. In a nod to the modern business environment, students will learn to appreciate the importance of e-commerce to business stakeholders.

This course is an ideal preparation for anyone going into any type of business in the future, whether it is medicine, engineering, or selling fruit on street corners!

Is it for you?

Students need an interest in how modern businesses function. They need excellent analytical and communication skills.

Major Topics Covered

Business and its Environment, People in Organisations, Marketing, Operations and Project Management, Finance and Accounting, Strategic Management.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Short Q's and Essay) 1 hour 15 mins (40% of AS grade), Paper 2 (Data Response) 1 hour 30 min (60% of AS grade)

A2: Paper 3 (Case Study) 3 Hours (50% of A2 grade)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Though not usually needed for any Business degree, it is favoured by local institutions. It is never a requirement for universities in the UK/US.

Useful for: Candidates wishing to pursue careers in business management. It is also useful for anyone who will end up involved in any type of business. At degree level it is useful for Marketing, Business, Finance, and Economics.

Not required for: Most degrees.

Note: Following advice from universities, we do not allow students to do **both** Business and Economics at either AS or A Level.

Chemistry 9701

Course requirements: A/A* at IGCSE Chemistry (Extended)

Outline

Although far more interesting (and challenging!) than IGCSE Chemistry it is not simply 'more of the same'. The course is very descriptive and requires a high proficiency in English. Deviations in trends are analysed and discussed in Atomic Structure, mathematical understanding is required in Equilibria and Energetics and a high degree of problem solving is needed in Organic Chemistry. Students half way through the course are often shell-shocked and left wondering if they've picked the right course. For those who work hard and persevere, the rewards are very gratifying.

Is it for you?

It is hard to draw parallels between the IGCSE and A Level courses as they are so very different. However, if a student enjoys high level scientific concepts and is good at communicating their ideas on paper, the course is for you. During all A Level courses there are periods of self-doubt. This is understandable. However, to excel at this level, students need to be very resilient and have to appreciate that things often get worse before they get better. The A/A* entry requirement reflects the difficulty of the course.

Major Topics Covered

AS: Physical chemistry: Atoms, molecules and stoichiometry, Atomic structure, Chemical bonding, States of matter, Chemical energetics, Equilibria, Reaction kinetics.

Inorganic chemistry: Chemical periodicity, Group 2, Group 17, Nitrogen and sulphur.

Organic chemistry: Hydrocarbons, Halogen derivatives, Hydroxy compounds, Carbonyl compounds, Carboxylic acids and derivatives

A2: Physical chemistry: Electrochemistry. **Inorganic chemistry:** An introduction to the chemistry of transition element. **Organic chemistry:** Nitrogen compounds, Polymerisation, Analytical techniques, Organic synthesis

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (mc) 1hr (40 Marks), Paper 2 (structured) 1 hr 15 (60 Marks), Paper 3 (practical) 2 hrs

A2: Paper 4 (structured) 2hrs (100 Marks), Paper 5 (planning) 1 hr 15 (30 Marks)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Chemistry, Medicine, Medicinal Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Biochemistry, Biotechnologist, Healthcare scientist, Forensic scientist, Pharmacologist.

Useful for: Any subject where analytical work is required, many biosciences, teaching.

Not required for: Business and Finance courses – check with your university of choice.

Computer Science 9608

Course requirements: A/A* at IGCSE Computer Science/ICT/Mathematics

Outline

This syllabus aims to encourage the development of computational thinking, that is thinking about what can be computed and how by the use of abstraction and decomposition. It includes consideration of the data required. Learning computational thinking involves learning to program, by writing computer code, because this is the means by which computational thinking is expressed.

Is it for you?

Students doing Computer Science should have genuine interest in programming and the development of computer technology and systems, which will inform their decisions and support their participation in an increasingly technologically independent society. A student with strong mathematical background and willing to work hard can be successful in this subject.

Major Topics Covered

AS: Information representation, Communication and Internet technologies, Hardware, Database and data modelling, Algorithm design and problem-solving, Programming.

A2: Data representation, System software, Monitoring and control systems, Computational thinking and problem-solving, Stages of software development

Assessment

Each examination paper will consist of a variable number of short-answer and structured questions of variable mark value. Candidates will answer on the question paper

Paper	Section title	Duration	Marks	Weighing (%)	
				AS	A
1	Theory Fundamentals	1 h 30 min	75	50	25
2	Fundamental Problem-solving and Programming Skills	2 h	75	50	25
3	Advanced Theory	1 h 30 min	75	-	25
4	Further Problem-solving and Programming Skills	2 h	75	-	25

For university and future careers

Needed for: Computer Science and IT related courses

Useful for: Engineering, Maths, Finance, Economics

Not required for: most degrees

Economics 9708

Course requirements: At least a B in IGCSE Economics or equivalent and at least a B in Mathematics. Students with an excellent academic background who have not done IGCSE Economics may be considered on a case by case basis.

Outline

This course aims to enable students to develop a sound an understanding of wider economic principles and to use the tools of economic analysis in specific situations. They should be able to employ economic skills with reference to individuals, groups and organisations, in order to understand better the real world. Using this knowledge they should then be able to participate more fully in decision-making processes, as consumers, producers and citizens at the local, national and international levels. This is a much broader look at finance and the economy than the most common alternative, Business.

Is it for you?

Students need an interest in how the world works and good general knowledge. They should also have excellent maths and communication skills.

Major Topics Covered

Basic economic ideas and resource allocation, the price system and the micro economy, Government microeconomic intervention, The macro economy, and Government macro intervention.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Multiple Choice) 1 hour (40% of AS grade), Paper 2 (Data Response and Essay) 1 hour 30 min (60% of AS grade)

A2: Paper 3 (Multiple Choice) 1 Hour 15 min (15% of A2 grade), Paper 4 (Data Response and Essays) 2 Hours 15 mins (35% of A2 grade)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Though not usually needed for any degree, it is a good choice for those planning to do Economics.

Useful for: Marketing, Business, Finance, Politics, Development and Economics.

Not required for: Most degrees.

Note: Following advice from universities, we do not allow students to do **both** Business and Economics at either AS or A Level.

English Language 9093

Course requirements: at least a grade A or B in English First Language and preferably Literature in English at IGCSE, BGCSE or in an equivalent examination.

Outline

The A Level English Language course encourages a critical and informed response to writing in a range of forms, styles and contexts, as well as the interdependent skills of reading, analysis and communication. The aim is to achieve effective and appropriate communication.

Is it for you?

A great enthusiasm for reading a variety of forms of writing, both fiction and non-fiction, is vital. This is not a course for a student who never reads for their own pleasure.

Major Topics Covered

AS: candidates must identify distinguishing features of passages, and relate them to the function and context of the writing. In the directed writing tasks, they should demonstrate the ability to write for a specific purpose and/or audience using appropriate vocabulary, tone and style. For Composition, candidates must demonstrate accurate use of language in an appropriate style and the ability to write an imaginative piece and to construct an argument.

A2: candidates are required to write for a specific purpose and/or audience using appropriate vocabulary, tone, and style. They must identify and analyse distinguishing features of written and spoken language and be able to compare different styles of text. Two topic areas are also covered: spoken language and social groups and English as a global language.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 Passages 2 hours 15 minutes (50 marks), Paper 2 Writing 2 hours (50 marks)

A2: Paper 3 Text Analysis 2 hours 15 minutes (50 marks), Paper 4 Language Topics 2 hours 15 minutes (50 marks)

For university and future careers

Needed for: English Degrees. Occasionally an odd SA university will require AS English for all their courses (notably Pretoria) – this changes from time to time and you need to check carefully. Most SA universities do not require AS English.

Useful for: Law, Journalism, Librarianship, PR, Business, Economics, Marketing, Publishing, Advertising, Media careers, Research, Commerce, Broadcasting, Entrepreneurship

Not required for: Most degrees

English Literature 9695

Course Requirements: at least a grade A or B in English First Language and Literature in English in IGCSE, BGCSE or an equivalent examination.

Outline

Literature in English is the study of a variety of texts in different forms and from different periods and cultures. Study takes the form of discussion, short tasks, drama, as well as writing essays. Literature in English is not only enjoyable, but a subject in which you learn a variety of skills:

- It offers you an insight into other minds, cultures and experiences, encouraging critical thinking.
- It teaches you to express your ideas logically, clearly and succinctly, demanding personal engagement and a personal response.

Is it for you?

There is much freedom attached to A Level work, so students will need to acquire the responsibility of self-discipline. A great deal of background reading, research and note-taking must be done independently. Students who are prepared to work hard will find Literature in English a stimulating and rewarding course. A love of reading is an obvious prerequisite.

Major Topics Covered

AS: at least one novel, a poetry selection and two plays

A2: a Shakespeare play, a pre-twentieth century novel, plus a wide variety of extracts from prose, poetry and drama

Assessment

AS: Paper 3 Poetry and Prose 2 hours (50 marks), Paper 4 Drama 2 hours (50 Marks)

A2: Paper 5 Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts 2 hours (50 marks), Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation 2 hours (50 marks)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Literature Degrees

Useful for: Law, Journalism, Librarianship, PR, Marketing and Business, Publishing, Advertising, Marketing, Media careers.

Not required for: most degrees

Geography 9696

Course requirements: A/B at IGCSE Geography

Outline

Aimed at those with a passion for the subject, it expands upon the learners' knowledge, investigative abilities, and their evaluation and decision-making skills gained at IGCSE. Learners are given a thorough introduction to a variety of topics such as hydrology and fluvial geomorphology, atmosphere and weather, rocks and weathering, population change and settlement dynamics. The Advanced Physical Options consider a range of environments, from tropical to arid, while in the Advanced Human Options learners study topics such as environmental management, global interdependence and economic transition. It offers learners a thorough introduction to the complexity of natural systems, human systems and processes; as well as their linkages and interdependencies.

Is it for you?

An ideal student should have found IGCSE Geography not particularly challenging, possessing investigative abilities, evaluation and decision-making skills, and be prepared to challenge themselves!

Major Topics Covered

AS: (Core Physical Geography) Hydrology and fluvial geomorphology, Atmosphere and weather, Rocks and weathering; (Core Human Geography) Population, Migration, Settlement dynamics

A2: (Advanced Physical Geography Options): A choice of **two** topics from the following options - Tropical environments, Coastal environments, Hazardous environments, Hot arid and semi-arid environments; (Advanced Human Geography Options): A choice of **two** topics from the following options - Production, location and change, Environmental management, Global interdependence, Economic transition.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Core Physical Geography) 1 hr 30 minutes (60 Marks), Paper 2 (Core Human Geography) 1 hr 30 minutes (60 Marks)

A2: Paper 3 (Advanced Physical Geography Options) 1 hr 30 minutes (60 Marks), Paper 4 (Advanced Human Geography Options) 1 hr 30 minutes (60 Marks)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Environmental Science, Environmental Engineering, Geology, Environmental Health, Meteorology, Architecture, Earth Science, Hydrology, Mining Engineering, etc.

Useful for: Any subject where mapping, statistics or number work is required. This includes many other disciplines such as Economics.

History 9389

Course Requirements: A/A* at IGCSE History or at least a B in English First Language and good analytical skills. While IGCSE History is beneficial it is not a mandatory requirement.

Outline

Students will have the chance to study various historical episodes and will develop the following skills:

- assessing different interpretations of an argument
- formulating their own ideas about a subject
- presenting clear and logical arguments
- evaluating historical evidence
- developing an understanding of historical concepts such as cause and effect, similarity and difference and continuity and change.

Is it for you?

A real interest in the past and the ability to analyse historical evidence are essential. As students must present their arguments in written form, excellent English skills are hugely beneficial.

Major Topics Covered

The French Revolution, Unification of Germany and Italy, Origins of the First World War, The League of Nations, Russian Revolution, 20th Century Dictators in Europe: Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin, Causes and results of the Holocaust, Origins of the Cold War

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (League of Nations), 1 hour; Paper 2 (two essay questions) 1.5 hours

A2: Paper 3 (Holocaust or Origins of the Cold War), 1 hour; Paper 4 (two essay questions based on any two of the dictators)

Needed for: History Degrees, Archaeology, etc.

Useful for: For any degree requiring good evidence based communication such as Law, Journalism, Librarianship, PR, Marketing, Business, Publishing, Advertising, Marketing, Media careers. Note some universities prefer this to Maths for their Business students!

Not required for: most degrees

Mathematics 9709

Course requirements: A/A* at IGCSE Mathematics (Extended)

Outline

The A Level Maths course is aimed at those with a passion for the subject. It expands upon the IGCSE Extended course and delves into new territory such as Calculus. At AS students are given a thorough introduction to the basics of Statistics while at A2 students are given a chance to experience Mechanics. Both of these courses show the real world applications of the subject. The Pure maths papers cover a wide range of topics that students will find invaluable in their future careers. While having done Add Maths at IGCSE offers a slight advantage it is by no means required as all topics are taught from first principles.

Is it for you?

An ideal student should not have found IGCSE Maths particularly challenging, have excellent mental maths skills and not be too reliant on a calculator, have excellent algebra skills, have a 'feel' for numbers, have good spatial awareness, be a good communicator (including diagrams), and be prepared to work hard!

Major Topics Covered

AS: Geometry, Surds, Quadratics, Inequalities, Functions, Binomial Theorem, Sequences, Trigonometry, Radians, Vectors, Calculus, Statistical Diagrams, Dispersion, Arrangements, Probability, Normal Distribution

A2: Extends all the AS topics and adds in Logarithms and Complex Numbers. The Mechanics course covers Straight line motion, Momentum, Newton's Laws, Work Energy and Power.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Pure) 1hr 45 (75 Marks), Paper 6 (Statistics) 1 hr 15 (50 Marks)

A2: Paper 3 (Pure) 1hr 45 (75 Marks), Paper 4 (Mechanics) 1 hr 15 (50 Marks)

For university and future careers

Needed for: Mathematics, Actuarial Sciences, Pure Sciences, Medicine (at least AS), Engineering, some Business and Finance courses

Useful for: Any subject where statistics or number work is required. This includes many Social Sciences, such as Psychology.

Not required for: Many Business and Finance courses – check with your university of choice

Note: We do not currently offer Further Maths due to low demand. Universities cannot require it if the school does not offer it.

Physics 9702

Course requirements: A/A* at IGCSE Physics and realistically at least an A at IGCSE Maths.

Outline

The A Level Physics course covers a broad range of topics, but it is all about understanding how the world (indeed the Universe!) works at different levels. A large part of the course is understanding scientific methods and the experimental evidence needed to test and prove theories. Mathematics is integral to physics, as it is the language that is used to express physical principles and models. It is also a tool to analyse theoretical models, solve quantitative problems and produce predictions.

Is it for you?

An ideal student should have found IGCSE Physics exciting, but not particularly difficult. Good Maths skills are a requirement – which explains why so many non-Science courses appreciate Physics. Students should have a real interest in how the world works and be willing to push themselves.

Major Topics Covered

AS: Physical quantities and units, Measurement techniques, Kinematics, Dynamics, Forces, density and pressure, Work, energy and power, Deformation of solids, Waves, Superposition, Electric fields, Current of electricity, D.C. circuits, Particle and nuclear physics

A2: In addition to extending some AS topics, the following are added - Motion in a circle, Gravitational fields, Ideal gases, Temperature, Thermal properties of materials, Oscillations, Communication, Capacitance, Electronics, Magnetic fields, Electromagnetic induction, Alternating currents, Quantum physics.

Assessment

AS: Paper 1 (Multiple Choice) 1hr 15 (31% of the AS grade), Paper 2 (Structured Questions) 1 hr 15 (46% of the AS grade), Paper 3 (Advanced Practical Skills) 2hr (23% of the AS grade)

A2: Paper 4 (Structured Questions) 2hr (38.5% of the A Level grade), Paper 5 (Planning, Analysis and Evaluation) 1 hr 15 (11.5% of the A Level grade)

For university and future careers

Needed for: All branches of Physics, the vast majority of Engineering courses.

Useful for: Any subject where advanced maths is applied. This includes Actuarial Science, Computer Science, Maths.

Not required for: Business and Finance, Humanities.