

## KS 4 Options

### Key dates

- **9th March** - Updated curriculum Guide on the school website.
- **9th to 13th March** - Students have assemblies to learn about the different options subjects.
- **19th March** - Options evening. This is an opportunity for families to meet with subject areas and learn more about the process.
- **20th March** - Online line option form becomes live, you will need the SIMS app to access this.
- **30th March** - Deadline for options form to be completed.



### Choosing KS 4 Options – Common questions students ask

#### **Should I Base GCSE Options On What I'm Good At?**

It's worth including this as a factor when choosing your GCSEs. You're likely to enjoy the subjects you're good at. Being good at a particular area might help you manage your GCSE workload, too, because you'll be able to complete work more quickly and get good results. What's more, learning more about a subject you have natural ability in might be useful when making career choices later down the line.

If you're not sure how good you are at a subject, you can talk to your teacher and ask for advice.

#### **Should I Base GCSE Options On What I Enjoy?**

It's fine to consider choosing subjects you like at GCSE level. You'll be studying that subject for several periods a week for the next two years, so it'll definitely help if there are aspects of the subject you enjoy! Even if you hate school, there's bound to be a subject you connect with. This could work to your advantage, because if you enjoy a subject you are more likely to work harder and get a higher grade in it. It's okay to do a subject just because you like it.

#### **When choosing subjects you enjoy, ask yourself two things:**

- What's the **content** of this subject? (Are you interested in the things you'll be learning about?)
- What **skills** does it require? (Do you think you can build the skills this subject requires?)

If you're worried about your final list of choices, look at the list and ask yourself: Is my final list of options a balanced one? Is it all just 'easy' subjects, which I like but might not be useful to me when it's time to do further education and/or get a job? Or is it a fair mix of useful stuff and fun stuff? (Not forgetting that useful stuff can be fun too!)

### **Should I Choose A GCSE Subject Because I Like The Teacher?**

It's a tricky one, because a great teacher can inspire you to do your best in a subject. However, how much you like your teacher should not be one of the key factors when choosing your GCSE options. That inspirational teacher might leave school, after all. There's no point doing a subject just to impress your favourite teacher, either. They won't be in your life forever. The person you most need to impress is yourself, because you're the one making choices to make your future a better one!

### **Should I Choose A GCSE Subject Because My Friends Are Doing It?**

It's better not to just choose a GCSE option because your friends are taking it. Doing different GCSEs shouldn't have any effect on your friendships – it will just mean you have lots to talk about when you're together at other times. Plus, there's a chance you'll make additional new friends in the subject you choose, too.

### **How Much Should Money And Future Salary Be A Factor When I'm Choosing GCSEs?**

It's really tempting to look up the average salaries of a whole bunch of jobs to see what GCSEs could lead you to a job that pays well. If you're asking yourself what jobs pay well, it's possible you haven't got a set career goal and you're still open to options.

Typically, science, technology, finance and business careers pay really well. Maths is a compulsory GCSE in the UK, so you're covered there. Taking double (or triple) science could work well for you too, but you have to mainly consider subjects you enjoy and subjects you're good at when choosing GCSE options.

You'll be at your happiest if your eventual career is one you feel able to do, and one you enjoy at least several aspects of. Never forget that there's the opportunity to get good pay in most walks of life if you make the most of what you've got and fortune is on your side. Your pay is likely to increase with experience, whichever career you end up in!



## Whose Advice Should I Listen To When Choosing GCSE Options?

**Teachers** at your school are really well-placed to offer you advice and support; do talk to your teachers if you have any questions about your GCSEs and how it all works.

**Careers advisors** are extremely well-trained and prepared to help you with your careers and GCSE-related questions – whatever your questions are, they will be able to offer support, resources and information to help you with your choices.

Your **parents** can also help – they should have your best interests at heart, and know you.

Your **friends** will be going through the same stress as you, so you can bounce ideas off them if you like... but it's important to remember it's your final decision.

## Are My A-Level Choices Affected By The GCSE Choices I Make Now?

Some A-level options don't require you to have studied them at GCSE first – for example, psychology, economics, media studies or law. For other subjects you'll most likely need the GCSE, so check with your teacher to make sure. Some A-levels, like science, may no longer be open to you if you choose a single science at GCSE. Taking double award science (core + additional) or triple award science (physics, chemistry and biology) at GCSE will help to keep your future options open.

## Do Universities Care About Which GCSE Options You Choose?

Most universities need you to have English and maths GCSEs... which is handy, because you'll be studying them as core GCSE subjects anyway.

For some degrees, or careers, their requirements for GCSE and A-level subjects aren't too limiting. For example, most unis don't mind which subjects you've studied before if you want to do a law degree – they just want you to have done well in the subjects you chose.

In some cases, you'll need specific A-levels (and therefore the GCSEs you need to be able to do those A-levels) to get on certain university courses (e.g. the sciences, history or foreign languages).

## Should I Think About How Courses Are Marked When Choosing My GCSE Options?

Individual GCSEs will be marked in a variety of ways – through reading and writing coursework completed either in lessons or as homework, exams and perhaps spoken exams (as in the case of



languages). You can think about how you perform well, and if there are any marking formats you find particularly challenging.

Your teachers are there to help you choose the most appropriate subjects for you. You can ask them if there's an oral test or if there's laboratory or fieldwork involved, and you can also ask them what percentage of marks is given for coursework.

If you have anything like dyslexia or dyspraxia, make sure the school knows and can accommodate your needs in periods and GCSE exams.

### **What's The Difference Between Triple and Double Award Science**

Triple award science is made up of three GCSEs, and students get separate GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics at the end of their two-year study.

Double award science is made up of two GCSEs which are GCSE science and additional science.

### **How Important Is It To Get Good Grades In My GCSEs?**

If you want to give yourself a wider choice of options after school, getting good grades is quite important. Universities and colleges only accept 9-4 GCSE pass grades for most courses. If you think you might struggle to achieve these higher pass grades, ask for support from teachers in choosing a set of GCSE options that will help you focus on your strengths and what you most enjoy. If you enjoy a subject, you're more likely to do your best and perform better in it. You'll still be wanting to get a balance of what you'd most enjoy studying for three years and what will be most 'useful', though.

### **Should I Take Subjects Which Aren't GCSEs?**

When you're choosing your GCSE options, you may find your school is offering a whole range of non-GCSE subjects like BTEC first certificates in Child Care and Construction. You can take these non-GCSE subjects if you're especially interested.

You can still apply to uni if you're taking BTECs instead of A-levels. It's worth noting that uni courses normally look to your GCSE grades – for example, if you want to be a physiotherapist, the uni will be very interested in the grades you achieved for your double or triple award science GCSE. However, if you also did First Certificate qualifications in this area, you would (A) feel more confident about the area of physiotherapy and (B) be able to show any uni your dedication and willingness to learn more.



## **Does My Final GCSE Options List Look Balanced?**

This is a helpful question to ask yourself once you've come up with a list of GCSE options you like the look of. Does it look like it's got a good general spread of subjects (so not pure science and maths, and not pure art or sport)? Does it feature 'traditional' subjects (like history or geography) so that you've got plenty of future options and a chance to impress universities and employers? Does it feature subjects you'll enjoy doing and want to learn? If the answer to all these questions is 'yes', the chances are you have a balanced final list of GCSE options that will make your next two years rewarding ones and set you up for later life.

## **Will I Ever Regret My GCSE Choices?**

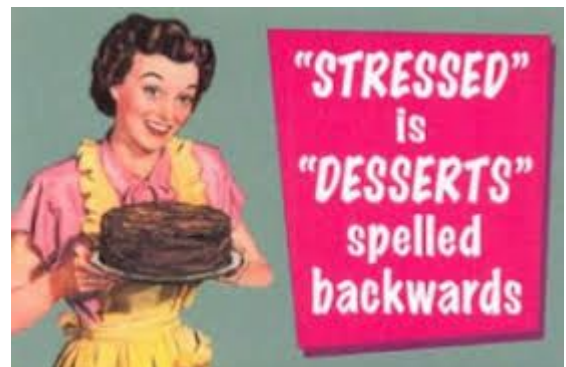
If you ask around, you'll find many people wish they'd not taken a certain GCSE, or with they'd had a bash at taking another GCSE. But a lot of the time, these are not life-changing regrets – they're more wishes that the two-year experience of taking GCSEs had been even more useful, or even more enjoyable.

At the end of the day, whatever GCSE options you pick will result in two years of you learning things you didn't know before and giving yourself the chance for a better future. If you do end up regretting GCSEs, it's more a case of not winning as much as you wanted than actually losing out.

There are plenty of options for more education further down the road if you feel you made a big mistake with your choices. You can also swap GCSEs if you change your mind early on – speak to your teachers, but do consider if you've fully given your chosen subjects a chance.

## **How Can I Cope With The Immense Stress Of Choosing GCSE Options? On Some Days I Don't Even Know What I Want To Have For Breakfast!**

Fear not – you can do this! It's tough to choose, but you'll feel quite good about your final list of options once you've done it. And know that however impossible it might feel to make this big decision, you're not alone. Everyone finds it tough to choose their options, yet somehow it happens and you can breathe a sigh of relief and move on.



Hopefully the advice you've found here will help some of your choices become a bit clearer.  
We wish you luck in your upcoming GCSEs!