



King's College  
*Saint Michaels*

**ADVANCED LEVEL STUDY OPTIONS**

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# A-Level Options Guide

## Introduction

The aim of the King's College group of schools is to be at the forefront of British education internationally. A-Level courses represent the gold standard for British education, due to the depth of knowledge and range of skills that are developed during an A-level course, and are the exit point for most students in British schools.

At King's College St Michaels (KCSM) we offer a diverse range of 2-year A-Level courses which are ideally suited to giving our students the tools to access some of the best Universities in the UK, and abroad, and equipping them with an academic toolkit which will support them throughout their future careers. Students normally study a minimum of 3 A-Levels subjects which can be augmented with additional subjects and the prestigious Extended Project Qualification where appropriate.

At KCSM we take pride in our strong pastoral support. Students have a designated House Parent, who takes responsibility for their wellbeing in boarding, and a Form Tutor, who is their first point of contact and support for academic matters. We have a Wellbeing committee who discuss and act upon any concerns arising to do with our students. Our Student Council provides the opportunity for students to have their say on matters relating to the running of the school, whilst our prefect team take responsibility for individual areas and provide a bridge between staff and students. Our staff are very experienced in preparing students for the assessments for these qualifications and in supporting students with their university applications. We run support sessions for university applications, mock interview classes and SAT, UKCAT and BMAT preparation sessions, to name but a few.

The College welcomes students from over 30 different countries and is well equipped to support all student learning requirements, whatever their level of English. Our experienced team provides individualised support to our students to help them to achieve English language qualifications and to improve their language skills in each subject area. Students work towards the International English Language Testing System (IELTs) assessments

The school is situated in 10 hectares of grounds in the beautiful countryside of Worcestershire, England and this provides a convenient base to visit many UK cities and places of interest. This location also facilitates numerous visits to lectures, museums and other educational resources to support our A-Level students and enhance their experience at KCSM, as well as providing a quiet and reflective environment for study.

# English Support for A-Level Students

Students at KCSM attend six English lessons per week. The time is divided between preparation for International English Language Testing System (IELTs) assessments and general English classes, with specific support for academic subjects.

All students are given regular formative assessments every 3 weeks in order to determine progress and implement support where necessary. Our expert English teachers monitor students to identify the best time for them to sit the IELTS test. There are regular opportunities to suit the IELTS assessments so that students can achieve the grades they need for university entrance. In this way, KCSM students avoid clashes between IELTS tests and their all-important A-Level exams.

English learning support aims to develop students' skills in the five areas of the English Language, namely:

## **Writing:**

- Formal and Informal letters
- Reports
- Summaries
- Stories
- Articles
- Academic Style Essays

## **Speaking:**

- Be able to provide information about themselves
- Make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement
- Describe photographs and other images
- Talk about opinions, likes/dislikes, habits and experiences
- Present chosen information in a seminar setting
- Hold and defend a position during debate

## **Listening:**

- Listen to lectures/texts to find key information
- Listen to find specific information and detailed meaning
- Listen for attitude and opinion

**Reading:**

- Read notices and other short texts to find specific information
- Skim read texts to gain a general understanding of the content
- Scan read texts to find specific information.
- Complete closed exercise using information derived from a text
- Read text in detail for full understanding of the information present within the text
- Understand vocabulary and grammar present in written text

**Pronunciation:**

Pronunciation is recognized as an often overlooked but key facet of development in the English language and will be an area of focus throughout the course, with an appropriate amount of time dedicated to it over the course of the academic year.

For those students who require additional help the team run additional English support lessons. These take the form of small group classes and are structured in such a way as to allow a focus on the needs of the group or individual, whether this is conversational support, exam support or specific subject support.

In line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) guidelines we would expect each student, after a year of study, to increase their level by one tier.

Therefore, a student beginning the course at a B2 level should expect to have reached level C1 by the end of the first year of study.

## Why A-Levels Matter

A levels are the traditional qualifications offered by schools and colleges for 16-19 year olds. They're highly valued by universities and employers and focus on development of a depth in knowledge of chosen academic subjects.

A levels are the most common qualifications studied to access higher education and are also valued by employers, because they show a good level of education. A level results are the gateway to most university courses. If a student applies to university in Year 13, they'll usually be given a 'conditional offer'. This is an offer of a place as long as they achieve certain A level grades.

Students should keep their options open if they are unsure about what they want to do in the future and usually select 3-4 subjects to study over the two year course. The most important criteria for choosing A levels subjects are:

1. Looking at what the student enjoys and is good at. If the student enjoys a subject or has an ability in it already, they are more likely to do well.
2. Are there any particular subjects and/or grades the student may need? If a student has a particular career, job, or further study in mind, they may need to choose specific A-levels in order to meet entry requirements.
3. How open the student wants to keep their future study and career choices?

## Option Subjects at A-Level

### ART

Art students at KCSM follow the AQA syllabus. This aims to provide the flexibility to allow students to develop their talents in an area of their choice. Students may study:

- Art, craft and design
- Fine art
- Graphic communication
- Textile design
- Three dimensional design
- Photography

There are 2 assessed elements for this course. A portfolio of work is internally assessed and contributes 60% of the total marks for the course while an externally assessed assignment makes up the remaining 40%.

### BUSINESS STUDIES

Business students at KCSM follow the Cambridge International Education (CIE) syllabus. On this course, students develop a deep understanding of a wide range of concepts including innovation, customer focus and change. They will learn how to analyse characteristics and activities of businesses, understand the importance of leadership in business, study how business leaders develop successful businesses, reflect on financial planning and practice and develop knowledge of strategic planning and management. The course promotes reflection and engagement on the part of our students and develops them fully for further study in this field.

The course is broken down into 6 sections:

- Business and its environment
- People in organisations
- Marketing

- Operations and project management
- Finance and accounting
- Strategic management

The assessment for this course consists of 3 papers which are taken at the end of A2.

## **ECONOMICS**

Economics is the branch of knowledge concerned with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth. Economists at KCSM follow the OCR A Level syllabus which aims to stretch, challenge and captivate the imagination of students to inspire them to undertake further study. Students are expected to develop an interest and appreciation of a range of economic concepts which developing a range of transferable skills which will aid them in their future study and career.

The course consists of the following topics:

- Microeconomic theory
- Theoretical working of the free market
- Imperfections and market failures
- Macroeconomy functions on a domestic and global level
- Policy approaches
- Changes in macroeconomics over time

This course is assessed by 3 2-hour written exams, taken at the end of A2.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Geography students at KCSM follow the Cambridge International A-Level course. The course aims to instil students with an appreciation of the importance of conserving the environment, an appreciation of the analyses used to understand complex human and environmental issues, awareness of the limitations of these methods, the ability to handle and manipulate data and the ability to think logically and present geographical arguments in a logical, coherent way. A level geography develops a wide range of transferable skills and develops students for further study of Geography at University.

The course, briefly, consists of the following elements.

The Physical core

- Hydrology and fluvial geography
- Atmosphere and weather
- Rocks and weathering

### The Human core

- Population
- Migration
- Settlement dynamics

### Advanced Physical Geography

- Tropical environments
- Coastal environments
- Hazardous environments
- Arid and semi- arid environments

### Advanced Human Geography

- Production, location and change
- Environmental management
- Global Interdependence
- Economic transition

Core modules are assessed by written AS-level exams at the end of A1, while the advanced options are examined in the A level exam at the end of A2.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Mathematics is the study of number, quantity and space. A-Level Mathematicians at KCSM follow the OCR A-Level syllabus. This course aims to prepare students for further study by developing a wide range of skills, develop understanding of the concepts and applications of mathematics and encourage students to take responsibility for their own mathematical development.

The course consists of the following overarching themes:

- Mathematical argument, language and proof
- Mathematical problem solving
- Mathematical modelling

Assessment for this course is via 6 written papers, each assessing a different unit.

## **FURTHER MATHEMATICS**

Further Mathematics aims to provide an extended mathematical education and a solid foundation for study of numerate disciplines, such as physics or engineering, at university. Further Mathematics students at KCSM follow the OCR syllabus which consists of the following elements:

- Pure mathematics
- Mechanics
- Statistics

These are assessed by 4 written examinations.

## **BIOLOGY**

Biology is the study of living things. At KCSM, our A-level Biologists follow the Cambridge International A-Level course. We aim to empower students with a thorough understanding of biological concepts and processes, an enquiring approach to applying sound practical skills to investigate scientific phenomena and, ultimately, prepare them for further study of Biology at university. Students will learn about the importance of the cell as the fundamental unit of life, natural selection and evolution, the impacts of the discovery of the structure of DNA, genetics, organisms and their environment and experimental skills. The course consists of 19 topics:

- Cell structure
- Biological molecules
- Enzymes
- Cell membranes and transport
- The mitotic cell cycle
- Nucleic acids and protein synthesis
- Transport in plants
- Gas exchange and smoking
- Infectious disease
- Immunity
- Energy and respiration
- Photosynthesis
- Homeostasis
- Control and coordination
- Inherited change
- Selection and evolution
- Biodiversity, classification and conservation
- Genetic technology

The first 11 topics from the A1 course while the latter topics are studied in A2. Assessment for this course consists of 3 exam papers taken at the end of A1 and 2 taken at the end of A2.

## CHEMISTRY

Chemistry is the study of the substances of which matter is composed, their properties and reactions, and the formation of new substances. At KCSM, our A-Level Chemists follow the OCR syllabus, which aims to develop in students an enthusiasm for, and deep appreciation of, the concepts that underpin our understanding of the chemical world. Students will also develop a broad range of skills including planning an investigation, handling and manipulating data, understanding of how society makes decisions about scientific progress and be well prepared for further study and a career in this subject area.

The course consists of the following elements:

- Development of practical skills in Chemistry
- Foundations in Chemistry
- Periodic table and energy
- Core organic chemistry
- Physical chemistry and transition elements
- Organic chemistry and analysis

Assessment in Chemistry consists of 3 written papers and a portfolio of practical work which is endorsed internally.

## PHYSICS

Physics is the study of the nature and properties of matter and energy. The subject matter of physics includes mechanics, heat, light and other radiation, sound, electricity, magnetism, and the structure of atoms. A-Level Physicists at KCSM follow the OCR A-Level syllabus. This course aims to develop in students a deep understanding of interrelated concepts within Physics as well as mathematical, investigative and practical skills, understanding of how society is affected by, and successful because of science and, ultimately, develop the curiosity and skillset that may lead to further study and a career in Science.

The course consists of the following elements:

- Development of practical skills in Physics
- Foundations of Physics
- Forces and Motion
- Electrons, waves and photons
- Newtonian world and astrophysics
- Particles and medical physics

These are assessed by 3 written papers and a practical portfolio that is endorsed internally.

## EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION (EPQ)

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is an exciting opportunity for students to focus their study on a topic of their choosing, while developing a range of transferable skills including research skills, self-evaluation, reflection, and communication. It is a good addition to any university application because the skills developed are highly valued by top UK universities. The EPQ at KCSM is accredited by AQA. With the aid of a specialist supervisor the student identifies a topic of interest and formulates a research question. They then undertake a period of research, at the end of which they must submit an appropriate product (essay, performance, piece of art) based on the research they have completed and a journal to evidence the process and what they have learned from it. At KCSM the EPQ is usually completed over a 12 month period from January to January, to avoid clashing with any exams.

## Examination Boards & Grading System

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Subject	Qualification	Grading System
Art	AQA	A* - E
Mathematics	OCR	A* - E
Further Mathematics	OCR	A* - E
Chemistry	OCR	A* - E
Physics	OCR	A* - E
Biology	CIE	A* - E
Business Studies	CIE	A* - E
Economics	OCR	A* - E
Geography	CIE	A* - E

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## Useful Websites

A Level subjects needed for degree courses

<http://university.which.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/what-a-levels-do-you-need-for-the-degree-you-want-to-study>

Information on Facilitating Subjects

<http://russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/>