



Higher Education, Careers

&

Sixth Form Choices

2011 - 2012

# A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

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## A GENERAL ADVICE

There are many factors you should take into account when considering your Sixth Form choices. The following list contains what we think are the most important:

### YOU SHOULD:

**(1) Consult relevant teachers, your tutor, present Sixth Formers and the IB syllabus booklets about the content and nature of IB subjects.** Seek advice from Heads of Departments and the Higher Education & Careers Department. Keep an open mind all the time and do not exclude any subject until you have learned as much about it as possible.

**(2) Discuss the suitability of your ideas with your tutor and use the Cambridge Profile Test results as an aid in your consultation with him/her.** Both sources will be able to offer you valuable advice in indicating how much a subject is suited to your particular aptitudes and skills. If you need further light to be shed on your test results, consult the Higher Education & Careers Department. External entrants to the Sixth Form should seek advice from their current school about the possibility of undertaking aptitude tests such as the "Cambridge Profile" if they feel it would be worthwhile.

**(3) Try to achieve a sensible blend of IB subjects offering you the greatest stimulus and flexibility,** especially if your mind is still open about your choice of university course and career. Find out what options your proposed IB choices will close for you (see section B).

**(4) Be aware that university admissions selectors are looking for a strong performance at I/GCSE,** especially for entry to high demand courses at popular universities.

### YOU SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER:

**(1) Choose a subject because your best friend is going to do it.** Try to insulate yourself from peer group pressure and be conscious that what is popular and fashionable may not be suitable for you. Studying different subjects will not mean that you never see your friends.

**(2) Think that because you have enjoyed the subject at your previous school or at I/GCSE level that you will inevitably continue to do so at IB.**

**(3) Choose a subject at IB from I/GCSE subjects simply because you are good at it now.** These subjects may be very different in content, and in the way they are taught and learned at IB.

**(4) Be afraid to consider a subject new to you** (e.g. Economics, Sports, Exercise and Health Science, Philosophy, Psychology, Classical Civilisation, Literature & Performance or Design Technology). It may give you a new lease of life and you may enjoy the freshness of a new subject.

**(5) Choose subjects solely based on entry to Higher Education.** Sixth Form education is about intellectual growth first, perceived 'value' and 'use' second. But see point 6 below.

While admissions tutors are often critical of A-Levels where there is some overlap, such as Business Studies and Economics, there is no such problem with the 6 subjects of the IB. Thus, English and Theatre in the IB are possible as the obligation to study a science, Maths and a foreign language ensures breadth.

If you have few or no future career ideas as yet, do not worry. Choose subjects which you find stimulating, interesting and enjoyable. If you choose subjects in which you are not interested you will find it hard to become motivated and achieve good grades. That said, you should try to keep open as many options as possible as your choices of IB subjects will have implications for your choice of degree course at university and your future career. These implications are some of several factors that should be taken into account when making your choices. The information below is to make you aware of what these implications are.

### **Summary**

In order to arrive at the right choice of IB subjects you must balance three important factors:

- your academic strengths and interests;
- your personal abilities and aptitudes, as reflected in your *Cambridge Profile Test*;
- the implications of your choice for higher education and future career path.

## B IB CHOICES AND ENTRY TO UNIVERSITY

### B1 Sciences at University

In their attempt to attract more applicants, some Science Departments at universities have tried to keep their conditions of entry relatively low, but popular universities do ask for higher grades. If you wish to avoid an extra (foundation) year, the qualifications needed to enter higher education courses in the Sciences are more stringent than in the Arts or the Social Sciences, so your choice of IB subjects needs careful consideration.

#### A Quick Overview:

University Subject	Essential IB Subjects	Recommended IB Subjects
Biology, Zoology, Botany	Chemistry HL	Biology HL
Engineering	Physics HL, Maths HL	Some departments will accept Maths SL alongside good scores in other subjects
Physics	Physics HL, Maths HL	
Medicine	Chemistry HL, (Biology HL for many medical schools)	Physics HL/SL, Maths HL/SL
Veterinary Science	Maths HL, Chemistry HL, Biology HL	
Dentistry	Chemistry HL, Biology HL	

### B2 Humanities at University

You may be surprised by how few options you are closing in higher education with your choice of Arts/Humanities IB subjects. You may be closing them on the Sciences, though some universities now provide foundation courses of a year's length for those doing Arts Higher Levels, who wish to have a change of direction. For some single honours Humanities courses at university, a Higher Level in the same subject is not a precondition of entry; for example, you may read History at some universities without having done it at Higher Level. However, if you think that you may wish to read a single Humanities subject at university, it is strongly recommended that you study it at Higher Level. Given the drift away from single honours degrees towards combined and modular degree courses, the specific conditions of entry may become less stringent. Good IB results, in whatever subjects (including Science subjects), are what is needed. (See section B4 for more information).

The conditions of entry to Language courses are generally more precise. For a standard Modern Languages course involving a 'mainstream' language (e.g. French or German), you should study at least one of the languages at HL; for a few universities (e.g. Durham, London, and Liverpool), you should study both. For some Joint Honours courses, e.g. French & Russian, both languages are needed. In short, if you are considering Languages at university, do at least one language at Higher Level, or two to be safe. Whether you do one or two, many university language courses (e.g. Cambridge) permit the entrant to learn a new language *ab initio* (from scratch).

### **B3 Social Sciences at University**

Entry to the Social Sciences (Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Business Studies, etc.) can be very flexible provided applicants have a strong IGCSE profile and are predicted high grades at IB. The absence of any preconditions undoubtedly contributes to the intense competition for entry to many of these courses. Some Economics Departments look for a high grade in Higher Level Maths, others are content with either Maths Standard Level or a good IGCSE performance in Maths and willingness to study further; you should research a university of interest for further clarification. Some universities favour Economics applicants who take a Science at Higher Level and for some Psychology courses, a Science or Maths at Higher Level is required, in others, it will always be advantageous.

### **B4 The IB and University Entrance**

The problems there have been in the past over the universities recognising the IB have all but disappeared; the record of success IB pupils have had from this school in being admitted to the university of their first choice speaks for itself, 91% in 2011. The nature of conditional offers from the universities varies, but usually takes one of four forms:

- (1) A Higher Level points score only (e.g. 665 in Geography, Chemistry and Biology);
- (2) A Higher Level points score plus an overall points score (e.g. 665 with a total points score of at least 34);
- (3) An overall points score with a specific points score in one subject. This is most common when the IB subject is directly relevant to the degree course (e.g. 34 points with a 6, or even a 7, in English for someone applying to read English at a popular university).
- (4) A total points score out of 45. This means applicants for highly competitive courses should not underestimate the importance of the Standard Level subjects.

Whilst the IB is recognised as offering a broad education at Sixth Form level and is especially attractive to someone wishing to study Maths, English, a foreign language, a classical language and a Science, it is rare for someone to read a subject at university because of their experience of it at Standard Level. Also, a Standard Level Science subject may well not be sufficient to qualify for entrance to university for a complementary science course. If you had queries like this, you would need to speak to the Head of Department of that subject.

A number of Sevenoaks pupils take up university places in the USA, where the IB diploma is very highly regarded as an excellent preparation for broad degree programmes on offer. Pupils will need to take SATs in the Lower Sixth and take part in an extensive spectrum of co-curricular activities to have the best chance of obtaining a place. Most students apply for the broad Liberal Arts programme, but for those applying for Engineering it would help to do Maths at Higher Level to perform well in the SATs.

## B5 Entrance Standards to University

These are governed not so much by the academic standards required for entry to courses, but by the level of demand for them. The higher the demand, the stiffer the entry requirements become. Any generalisations made here should be recognised as such, and careful note needs to be made of the exceptions, e.g. all courses for Oxford and Cambridge. Popular and prestigious universities have developed high standards of entry across the full range of their courses. Conversely, those universities that are not in the premier league are finding it more difficult to recruit students across all subjects, so their entrance standards are lower. In the very competitive market of league tables and top-up fees, a small elite of universities, attracting research funding and blessed with excellent resources, has emerged. While entrance to the rest is less challenging, it does not mean that the quality of education, or employment prospects are lower. Individual universities are developing centres of excellence in specific areas of undergraduate teaching. Some of the new universities have excellent courses in the more vocational fields (business management, tourism, computing), strong links with industry, and good graduate employment statistics.

## B6 Oxbridge

If you have done IGCSEs, Oxbridge would expect you to achieve good grades, such as mostly A\*s with some As, in all your subjects, preferably with the A\*s in those directly relevant to your chosen degree course.

Grade predictions (made at the end of the Summer Term in the Lower Sixth) for Oxbridge must be high, generally in excess of 40 points. It has to be emphasised that even then, such predictions are by no means a guarantee that a conditional offer will be forthcoming. Hard work during the Lower Sixth is the only way to earn the high predictions that are needed for applications.

<b>Standard offer for Sciences:</b>	777, 776 or 766 (Oxford only) at Higher Level with an overall points score of at least 39 (and a 7 in Maths for Physics/Engineering)
<b>Standard offer for Humanities:</b>	777, 776 or 766 (Oxford only) at Higher Level with an overall points score of at least 39

Some preparation for Oxbridge applicants is necessary in the summer holidays between the Lower and Upper Sixth years. Those contemplating Oxbridge must develop an interest in, and recognise the value of academic study for its own sake, and not view admission solely as a means of establishing a good job thereafter. Additional examinations in the Summer Term of the Upper Sixth, set by the Cambridge Colleges and known as STEP are now only required of pupils seeking entrance to read Mathematics. However, in an effort to distinguish between an ever increasing number of equally qualified applicants, Oxbridge colleges have introduced external and internal tests for certain subjects, such as BMAT, UKCAT, LNAT (for Law), Thinking Skills Assessments (Oxford and some Cambridge colleges) and tests for History, English, PPE, PPP, MLL, Experimental Psychology, Classics, Computer Science and Maths and Physics (Oxford).

## C OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

### C1 IB Subjects and Entry into the Professions

Subject enthusiasts may mislead you into claiming their subject is essential for entry into a particular profession, e.g. History HL is essential for Law. It is not! Any subject combination, including the Sciences but excluding Art, will do for Law, but note the high standards of entry. You may also hear that journalists need English HL; but you do not have to do any Humanities subjects at HL to do Journalism or Media Studies as a degree course. **Surprisingly few careers require specific IB subjects outside medical, technical and scientific careers.** See Section F for exact details.

Rumours frequently circulate that certain IB subjects are not looked on by universities with as much respect as others. The subjects we offer for IB are given equal respect by the universities so the question of how your choice of subject is valued by the university should not be a factor to consider when making your choices. (Several top universities have published a list of A-Level subjects which, when these make up 2 of the 3 offered, are considered 'less effective'. For IB these would be Art, Design Technology and Theatre, of which therefore only one should be taken at HL if a student is considering an application to Oxbridge.) **Clarification should be sought if concern persists.**

### C2 Degree Choice and the Job Market

The economic climate is the most important criterion in influencing the prospects of graduates gaining employment after university. As more young people emerge from universities with degrees, the job market for graduates is increasingly competitive, especially in the current economic situation. Someone not completing a degree, or the equivalent, would appear at a distinct disadvantage. In general, what many employers are looking for is not graduates with specific subject disciplines, but those who have learned, through their degree courses, the transferable skills which can be adapted and applied to the type of work they will be doing. Also, given that the majority make job offers to would-be graduates before their degree results are published, the quality of the applicant's public exam results must be an important consideration in their minds when assessing job applications. This underlines the importance of choosing the right IB subjects, i.e. those that would both stimulate and motivate, so that the best possible results are achieved.

Employers may look at academic status first and foremost but there is also evidence to suggest they are interested in an applicant who is well educated in the broadest sense. Personality, work experience, co-curricular activities, IT skills, business awareness, confidence in a foreign language, interests and achievements are all important to develop and maintain while at university. It is of advantage for entry to the most highly competitive colleges in the USA to have good documentation of activities such as VSU. This should not only list participation, but explain the length of time, commitment and depth of experience gained. Colleges in the USA are also keen to find evidence of leadership in sports or in co-curricular experience in general.

### **C3 Limits to your Choice**

The school timetable and the awarding body (exam board) places limits on your choice of combinations of IB. You need to consult the blocking system for IB which will be available when choice forms are circulated. For the IB, you have to choose six subjects. Note that you have to do English, a foreign language, Maths, a Science (this includes Design Technology) and a Humanities subject. You may choose the sixth subject according to individual interest; this enables students to study more than one science, more than one foreign/classical language, or to study Art, Music or Theatre.

### **C4 Art and Design**

For IB it is possible to select both Art and Design Technology at Higher Level. Anyone wishing to pursue a career in Graphic/Fashion/Interior Design needs to undertake a one year Art/Design foundation course at a college or university before starting a degree course. Well developed drawing skills and the compilation of a portfolio are necessary qualifications for entry to the foundation year, so anyone interested in this area of Design is especially recommended to take an externally examined course in Art in the Sixth Form. It is important to recognise the complementary nature of Art and Design. If there is any possibility of someone who chooses to do Design Technology at IB pursuing it in higher education and beyond, he/she should develop drawing skills at school even if that person has a clear eye on a technologically based Design course such as Product, Industrial or Engineering Design. Maths is a useful complementary IB subject for Design Technology. See section D.

### **C5 Journalism**

Employees in the media/journalism world do not appear to view degree courses in Journalism or Media Studies with great respect. They would, in general, prefer someone to do a conventional academic degree and expect a media commitment to be revealed by the applicant's co-curricular involvement. Budding journalists should start to compile a portfolio of evidence, in the form of articles for newspapers and magazines and periods of work experience with local or national papers, as proof of their commitment to the career. Employers are looking for drive, initiative and an appetite for hard work, essential qualities for their profession. Those who take the initiative early are likely to gain entry to this very competitive career, which is not perhaps as glamorous as some teenagers are led to believe.

### **C6 Work Experience**

Entry to university vocational courses (e.g. Medicine, Law, Accountancy, and Architecture) is the most competitive of all. In order for an application to stand out, work experience in the chosen area of study is essential; it could make the difference between receiving a conditional offer and not. Many colleges in the USA use evidence of at least two summers of work experience as exemplifying long-term co-curricular commitment to a subject. Thus, students seeking to study biomedical subjects, for example, would be well advised to develop laboratory experience prior to entering the Upper Sixth.

## D Financial Commitments for University

The payment of tuition fees for home students is now mandatory (up to £9000 a year at most universities). All home students have access to loans repayable after graduation. Those classified as overseas students will have to pay for their maintenance and full tuition. Tuition fees for overseas students at a typical university are anywhere between £12,000 a year for Humanities and Social Science courses to £30,000 for Medicine and Dentistry.

The decision as to how you are classified rests with individual universities. They use the Education Regulations 1983 to decide a student's fees status. These state that to be eligible for home fees you will need to be in one of the following categories:

- You have been living in the UK for the three years immediately before the start of your course and your main reason for living here has not been for education.
- You are an EU national (or at least one parent is) and you have been living within the EU for three years immediately prior to the start of your course.
- You would have been living in the EU (for EU nationals) or UK (for non-EU nationals) for the three years immediately before the start of the course if you or your parents had not been temporarily employed outside the EU or UK.
- You have been granted refugee or asylum status in the UK, or are the spouse or child of a refugee.
- You are a recently settled immigrant who previously had never had the right of abode in the UK and whose settled status was granted by either 1st September, 1st January or 1st April, whichever is the closest to the start of the course.
- You, or your parent, have been granted exceptional leave to remain in the UK.

## E Useful Reference Material

These are available from the Higher Education & Study Centre in the Aisher Hall. External entrants to the sixth form should use the careers library at their current school.

1. **JobFile.** Description of qualifications and training needed for various careers.
2. **Choosing your Degree Course and University** by Brian Heap.  
Brief information on content and structure of degree courses by subject. Published by Trotman.
3. **Degree Course Offers** by Brian Heap.  
A directory listing standards of entry to degree courses at different universities. Published by Trotman.
4. **CRAC Degree Course Guides.** Published by Trotman
5. **www.ucas.com** The UCAS website.

## F A Rough Guide to Sensible Combinations

University Course or Career	Suggested subjects at IB Higher Level Mandatory combinations are <u>underlined</u>
Accountancy	Maths and Economics.
Advertising	Any of Economics, Geography, History, Art and Design Technology.
Actuarial Work	<u>Maths</u> .
Administration, the Civil Service, etc.	Almost any combination but subjects include Latin, Greek, English, History, Economics or Geography and a Foreign Language, or two Languages for EU work and some diplomatic work; but Sciences for scientific branch careers.
Agriculture, Agricultural Research, Land Surveyor	Biology, <u>Chemistry</u> and/or <u>Physics</u> , Geography.
Architecture	Maths and Physics with a portfolio of creative work.
Banking, Finance, Insurance	Economics, Maths, Physics; a language is also very useful.
Business Studies	GCSE Maths is essential and IB Maths would be an advantage. Languages strongly recommended.
Chartered Surveyor	Geography, Maths, Economics, History, Art and Design Technology.
Chemistry	<u>Chemistry</u> , Maths, Physics or Biology.
Chemical Engineering	<u>Chemistry</u> , <u>Maths</u> and Physics
Classics, Archaeology, Oriental Languages	Latin, Greek, English, History and Classical Civilisation. A Modern Language.
Computer Science, Statistics, Numerical Analysis	Maths, Physics and a third science.
Dentistry	<u>Chemistry</u> , Biology, Physics and Maths.
Design	Design Technology: plus Maths, Physics (engineering side). Art if committed to a career in 'artistic' Design. See C4.
Engineering	<u>Physics</u> , <u>Maths</u> . Design Technology, Economics and a language.
English, Drama, English and Drama	English and a Foreign or Classical Language or Classical Civilisation or History.
Fine Art	Art, English or any other combination.
Geography (art emphasis)	<u>Geography</u> , History, Economics, English, Languages, Art, one Science.
Geography (science emphasis)	<u>Geography</u> , Maths or Physics, Biology, Chemistry.
Geology	Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Maths, Biology. At least two of these required.
History	History, Languages, English or Economics. A Modern Language for Modern History and a Classical Language for Ancient History.

History of Art	Art, History, English; a modern and/or classical language.
Law	Any combination, though History, Maths, Latin, English, and/or Economics are useful. For Patent Law, add a Science.
Leisure Industry, Sports Studies, Sports Science	Economics, Sports, Health and Exercise Science and another science.
Management Studies, Management Science	Maths and Economics.
Materials Science, Metallurgy	<u>Chemistry</u> , Physics and Maths, Design Technology.
Maths, Maths with Physics, Theoretical Physics	<u>Maths</u> , <u>Physics</u> and a third science.
Media and Communication Studies	English, a language.
Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry	<u>Chemistry</u> and Biology or Physics. Medical schools like a non-science subject at IB HL. Although some are mentioning a preference for Maths HL.
Modern Languages	<u>Modern Language</u> in main area of study. Second Modern Language very helpful.
Music	<u>Music HL</u> or practical music skills (grade 8 on one or more instruments).
Natural Sciences	<u>Maths</u> and two of <u>Chemistry</u> , <u>Physics</u> , <u>Biology</u> .
Pharmacology	<u>Chemistry</u> , <u>another Science</u>
Philosophy	Philosophy. No specific requirements but an arts-science mix is useful.
Physics, Applied Physics, Mathematical Physics	<u>Physics</u> , <u>Maths</u> , plus one other (Chemistry, Biology, Further Maths).
Politics	No specific requirements.
Psychology	No particular subjects required though the inclusion of a science subject or Maths is advantageous.
Teaching	English, a Science, Maths, i.e. a ' <u>core</u> ' subject if interested in primary school teaching.
Technologies involving Chemistry (Plastics, Food etc.)	<u>Chemistry</u> , Physics and either Maths (e.g. Plastics) or Biology (eg. Food) or another subject.
Theology, Religious Studies	Preferably an Arts course including English or History or both. Latin and/or Greek are useful subjects too.
Town and Country Planning	<u>Geography</u> , Maths, Economics, Art, Design.