

YEAR 9

OPTIONS 2026



Student and parent guide to
KS4 option choices





CASTLE HALL
ACADEMY

Vision

To achieve academic excellence, develop character, and raise aspirations for all at **Castle Hall Academy**



Academic Excellence



Develop Character



Raising Aspirations

Key Drivers



Heart

Developing a strong moral compass



Mind

Developing our capacity to think



Communication

Communicating with people and cultures outside of ourselves

Mission

To become an academy
‘where hearts and minds connect’



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ACADEMY

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YEAR 9 OPTIONS



Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

During this half term we are starting the process of choosing options to study for the next two years. Our aim is that all of our Key Stage 4 students follow courses that are relevant, at which they will be successful and which they enjoy.

We design a curriculum and a timetable to allow as many of you as possible to follow the courses of your choice. It is important that we are able to guide choices in some areas: we will be making some recommendations on the language option to enable students to follow the EBacc suite of subjects.

All students will be accessing information about the courses that are available over weeks 1&2 during Semester 2. This information will be delivered by Heads of Departments during Mastery, a freshers style fair at Options Evening, and students will have experience of the KS4 styles of lessons during their timetabled year 9 Option taster sessions. It is important that they ask the staff about all aspects of the course particularly if it has a practical element and is not a course they have studied before.

During the Parents and Options Evening on Thursday 26th February there will be the opportunity to see a short presentation along with advice and guidance for parents, carers and students regarding their option choices. It is recommended that parents/carers attend the evening to help guide student choices and get guidance from our expert subject specialists.

The deadline for submitting option request forms via MCAS will be Wednesday 18th March, which is the week we return to school after Easter. Please ensure this deadline is met in order for your option requests to be processed. Applications after this time may not be accepted, and students will be allocated options based on availability rather than choice.

Please be aware that whilst we will endeavour to place students in their first choices of options, due to timetable constraints and staffing, we cannot guarantee these will always be granted.

It is important that we get these decisions right and parents/carers and students are welcome to contact me at the academy at any time to ask for clarification or further information.

Any further enquires, please contact Mr Johnson as your HOY, or myself at nclay@castlehall.com.

Kindest regards,

Ms N Clay

Assistant Headteacher



IMPORTANT DATES

Keep up to date with the options process and ensure you complete your choices on time. Please contact the academy if you have any questions. Email office@castlehall.com



W/C 23rd February 2026
Introduction to Options and
subject assemblies



Thursday 26th February 2026
Parents and Options Evening
4:00–7:30pm



Wednesday 4th March and
Thursday 5th March
Taster lessons in all option subjects



Friday 6th March - MCAS Options
choices opens

Wednesday 18th March - Deadline
for option form submission



Academic Excellence



Developing Character



Raising Aspiration

SUBMITTING YOUR CHOICES

All option choices need to be made via MCAS (My Child At School).

There are two ways of doing this, either via an online web browser or via the app. Please use the guides at the end of this booklet to show you how to access and submit your choices.

If you do not have access to MCAS, please contact office@castlehall.com who will be able to support you with your log on details.

MCAS Options will become live on Friday 6th March 2026 and close on Wednesday 18th March 2026.

Please ensure all option choices are made within this time frame.



Academic Excellence



Developing Character



Raising Aspiration

COURSES WE OFFER

We currently offer GCSEs, BTEC Tech Awards and NCFE.

Compulsory - students will study the following GCSE subjects:

- Mathematics 1 GCSE
- English Language 1 GCSE
- English Literature 1 GCSE
- Science 2 GCSEs
- Religious Studies 1 GCSE
- History or Geography 1 GCSE

Choices - You will then choose two options from the following lists:

GCSE

3D Design
Art - (Art, Craft & Design)
Business
Drama
Food Preparation & Nutrition
Photography
Spanish

C band students will also have the following options available to them:

Computer Science
Psychology
Triple Science

VOCATIONAL AWARDS

Creative iMedia - Cambridge National
Music Technology - BTEC
Health & Fitness - NCFE Level 1/2
Health & Social Care - NCFE Level 1/2

NON EXAMINED SUBJECTS

Personal Development
Physical Education

GCSE GRADING

GCSEs have linear assessment, with all exams in the summer at the end of the course in Year 11. The majority of assessment will be by exam wherever possible and the contribution made by coursework will be greatly reduced or removed completely.

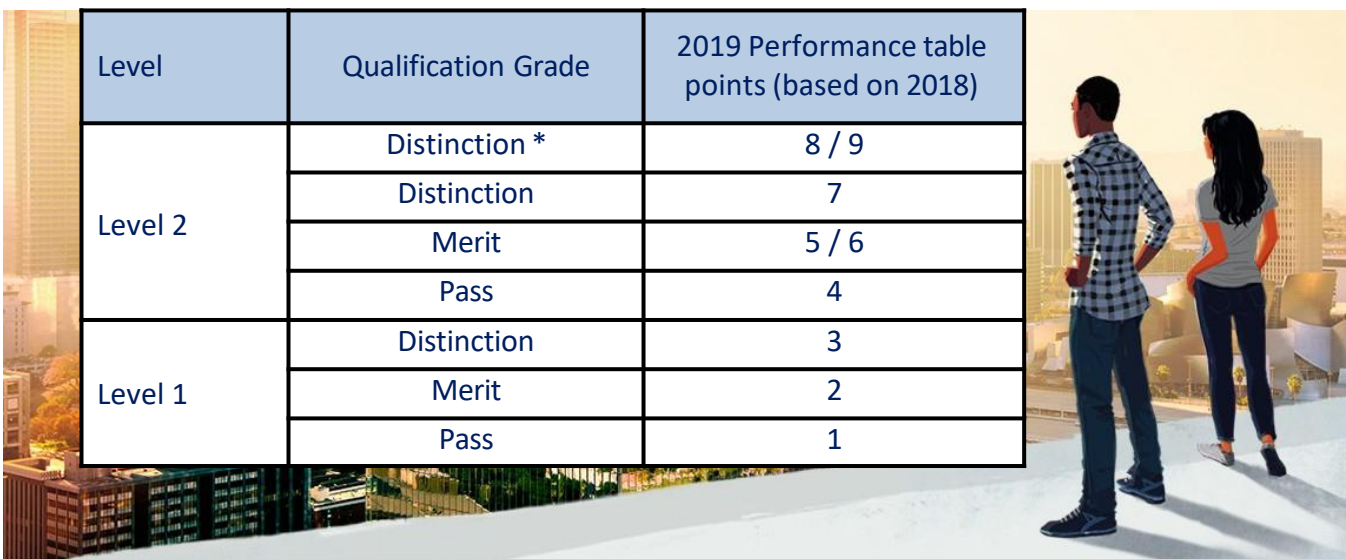
The new number scale, which has replaced the old A* - G scale. (See box— Right)

New Grading Structure	Old Grading Structure
9	A*
8	
7	A
6	
5	B
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

Standard Pass → 4

TECHNICAL AWARDS AND EQUIVALENT GRADING

Level	Qualification Grade	2019 Performance table points (based on 2018)
Level 2	Distinction *	8 / 9
	Distinction	7
	Merit	5 / 6
	Pass	4
Level 1	Distinction	3
	Merit	2
	Pass	1

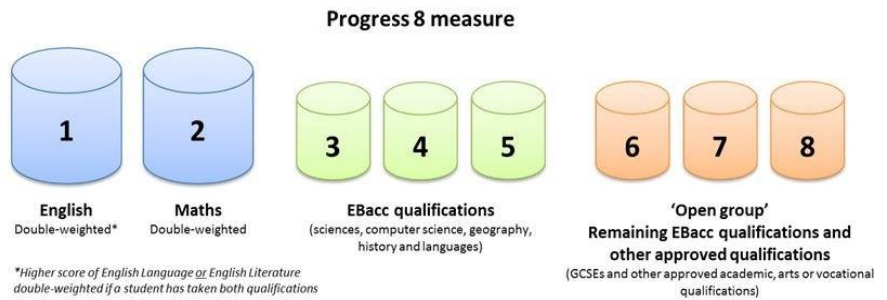


Technical Awards and Cambridge Nationals are more practical in nature and have a focus on applied learning. They provide students with knowledge and highly sought-after skills to prepare them for further study, apprenticeships and the workplace. Technical Awards contain a larger proportional of external assessments throughout the course compared to GCSEs and will be graded as Pass, Merit or Distinction.

ATTAINMENT 8 AND PROGRESS 8

Schools have to report on the attainment and progress of students. This takes into consideration their initial starting point and their achievement over their top 8 performing subjects.

Maths and English play a significant part in this measure, as they account for 40% of a student's Progress 8 measure. The Progress 8 measure encourages a broad and balanced curriculum.



THE ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE (EBacc)

The English Baccalaureate is highly valued by universities and employers. The English Baccalaureate subjects are: English, Maths, Science, Geography, History and Spanish.

If a student passes all of these subjects at grade 5 or higher they have achieved the English Baccalaureate.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR OPTION SUBJECTS

A few things to remember when making your choices:

- Think about how much progress you have made in each subject.
- You are far more likely to succeed in a subject you find interesting.
- Think about your possible future career. This will mean looking very carefully at qualifications required to do certain jobs. You may need to choose a subject now in order to study it at college and/or university.
- Read the information in this booklet carefully and ask your teachers for any extra information that you may need.
- Speak to teachers, older students, family and friends.
- Do not choose a subject just because your friend has chosen it.



Do not choose a subject just because you get on well with your present teacher. They may not be the teacher you will have next year. We cannot guarantee to provide all option choices for every student and in some cases alternative combinations will need to be considered.

When submitting your choices you will have to also choose a reserve option.



MATHEMATICS - GCSE (COMPULSORY)

Staff Contact: Mr A. Duckworth

What does the subject involve?



Maths is for everyone. It is diverse, engaging and essential in equipping students with the right skills to reach their future destination, whatever that may be. The course is designed to enable students to engage with, explore, enjoy and succeed in maths.

Topic Area	Foundation Tier (%)	Higher Tier (%)
Number	22 - 28	12 - 18
Algebra	17 - 23	27 - 33
Ratio and Proportion	22 - 28	17 - 23
Geometry	12 - 18	17 - 23
Probability & Statistics	12 - 18	12 - 18

Assessment Overview:

The Linear Examinations are taken at the end of the course.

Both the Foundation Tier and the Higher Tier have three assessment papers, all of equal length and equally weighted.

	Foundation Tier	Higher Tier
Paper 1 (non-calculator)	80 marks (1hr 30 min)	80 marks (1hr 30 min)
Paper 2 (calculator)	80 marks (1hr 30 min)	80 marks (1hr 30 min)
Paper 3 (calculator)	80 marks (1hr 30 min)	80 marks (1hr 30 min)

The Foundation Tier covers grades 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (U)

The Higher Tier covers grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3 (U)

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Mathematics is used every single day in all walks of life. Whether you want to be an architect, a pilot, a builder or own your own business you will need Mathematical skills such as measuring, understanding angles, problem solving with money, percentages and so much more. We will give you the opportunity to develop these skills and understanding through our carefully planned GCSE Schemes of work throughout years 10 and 11.

You can go on after GCSE to study Mathematics, Further Maths, Statistics or other areas such as Finance or Economics, using many of the skills developed in your GCSE years.



ENGLISH LITERATURE - GCSE (COMPULSORY)

Staff Contact: Miss F. Shala

What does the subject involve?

English Literature and English Language are designed to work together, giving students the opportunity to develop a wider range of knowledge and skills.



Assessment Overview:

All students are entered for English Literature. This will be studied along with English Language GCSE.

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th Century Novel: Written exam 1 Hr 45 mins/ 64 marks - 40% of GCSE

Section A: Shakespeare – students will answer one question on Macbeth. They will be required to write in detail about a theme within the play and then to write about the play as a whole.

Section B: The 19th Century Novel – students will answer one question on A Christmas Carol. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from A Christmas Carol and then to write about the novel as a whole.

Paper 2: Modern texts and poetry: Written exam 2 Hr 15 mins/ 96 marks - 60% of GCSE.

Section A: Modern texts – students will answer one essay question from An Inspector Calls.

Section B: Poetry – students will answer one comparative question on one named poem printed on the paper and one other poem from their chosen anthology cluster.

Section C: Unseen Poetry - students will answer one question on one unseen poem and one question comparing this poem with a second unseen poem.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

English Literature helps to develop students' skills of interpretation and evaluation. It is essential for aesthetic and personal development, broadening their horizons. The study of Literature not only improves students' English skills and their cultural development but is relevant for most further education courses.



SCIENCE - GCSE (COMPULSORY)

Staff Contact: Mr U. Makda

What does the subject involve?



Changes to the Science GCSE specification have brought the course more up to date with new and emerging technologies as well as scientific skills and content. The Science GCSE course is the equivalent of two GCSEs and will cover much of the same content that were present in the previous Core and Additional Science GCSEs, however rather than being separate GCSE qualifications they are now a combined GCSE.

Combined Science: Trilogy will see students covering all three science disciplines; Biology, Chemistry and Physics and whilst much of the content will remain the same as the previous GCSE course, there have been some topics omitted and new ones added to fall in-line with changes to technology and recent discoveries and inventions.

There has also been an increase in the requirement for maths skills within the Science GCSE. Biology will now consist of a minimum of 10% maths skills, Chemistry will consist of a minimum of 20% and Physics has seen the largest increase with at least a 30% requirement of all questions containing mathematical skills. This may take the form of equations, graphical analysis and data analysis.

Assessment Overview:

Students will be assessed via two papers for each of the disciplines, two Biology, two Chemistry and two Physics resulting in six papers in total.

There will be a variety of question styles used to assess maths skills, including multiple-step questions, open calculations and the need to either rearrange equations or apply a conversion of units, recall of 17 equations is a minimum requirement in Trilogy.

The remaining questions will consist of; multiple choice questions, structured, closed questions and open response questions.

Examinations will be terminal and will be delivered at the end of Year 11 for all students.

Students will receive a combined grade, which will be calculated by taking an average of all 6 of their exams to produce a double weighted GCSE grade, e.g. 4-4, 5-4, 5-5, 6-5, 6-6 etc.

	Paper 1	Paper 2
Biology	70 Marks (1hr 15 mins)	70 Marks (1hr 15 mins)
Chemistry	70 Marks (1hr 15 mins)	70 Marks (1hr 15 mins)
Physics	70 Marks (1hr 15 mins)	70 Marks (1hr 15 mins)

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Geophysicists, Optical Engineer, Clinical Trial Manager, Laboratory Director, Research Scientist, Product Development Scientist, Geologist, Biochemist, all medical pathways and careers, and many more. The list is endless.



RELIGIOUS STUDIES - GCSE

(COMPULSORY)

Staff Contact: Mrs F. Patel

What does the subject involve?



This course offers a range of faith-specific options and a variety of relevant contemporary themes, ensuring students have a diverse choice of intriguing subjects to explore and discuss. This qualification is linear. Students must take assessments in the following two components in the same series:

Paper 1:

The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices (50%)

- **Islam:** Beliefs, Teachings and Practices
- **Christianity:** Beliefs, Teachings and Practices

Paper 2:

Thematic studies (50%)

The course enhances your awareness and understanding of other beliefs and traditions, it gives you a solid grounding in being able to interact with other people.

Theme A: Family and Relationships

- Nature of families
- The purpose of families
- The nature and purpose of marriage
- Ethical arguments related to divorce

Theme B: Religion and Life

- The Origins of the universe
- Value of the world
- Value of human life
- The use and misuse of animals
- Beliefs about death and the afterlife
- Euthanasia

Theme D: Religion, Peace and Conflict

- The meaning and significance of peace, justice, reconciliation and forgiveness
- Terrorism
- Holy War
- Pacifism
- Nuclear weapons
- Religion and peace making

Theme E: Religion, Crime and Punishment

- Good and evil intentions
- Reasons for crime
- Aims of punishment
- Treatment of criminals.

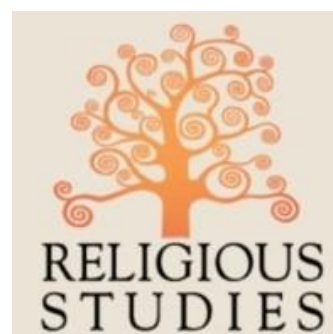
Assessment Overview:

Assessment Overview:

2 x 1 hour 45 min exams, each paper is worth 50%. Both completed at the end of Year 11.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Religious Studies equips students with the skills for almost any career, but ideally the course is valuable when dealing with different communities, e.g. jobs in the police, medical profession, social work, fire service and the armed forces.





GEOGRAPHY - GCSE

(COMPULSORY—CHOOSE GEOGRAPHY OR HISTORY)

Staff Contact: Mr G. Lawlor

What does the subject involve?

Students will travel the world from their classroom, exploring case studies in the United Kingdom (UK), higher income countries (HICs), newly emerging economies (NEEs) and lower income countries (LICs). Topics of study include climate change, poverty, deprivation, global shifts in economic power and the challenge of sustainable resource use. Students are also encouraged to understand their role in society, by considering different viewpoints, values and attitudes. This subject complements any of the other Humanities subjects, such as History. It also has links with Science and Business Studies.

Assessment Overview:

Paper 1: Living with the physical environment

written paper 1 hour 30 mins – 88 marks – 35%

Paper 2: Challenges in the human environment

written paper 1 hour 30 mins – 88 marks – 35%

Paper 3: Geographical applications -

written paper 1 hour 30 mins – 76 marks - 30%



What you will study:

Paper 1 - Living with the Physical Environment In Living with the Physical Environment you will study the challenge of natural hazards, weather hazards, climate change, the living world, ecosystems, tropical rainforests, cold environments, coastal landscapes in the UK, glacial landscapes in the UK. In the challenge of natural hazards, you will cover volcanoes, tsunamis, earthquakes and fold mountains. In landscapes of the UK, you will cover the water cycle, river landforms, flooding and flood protection, beaches, spits, caves, arches stacks and stumps. Hard and soft engineering strategies will also be explored. In weather hazards you will cover the weather in the UK, extreme weather, global climate change and tropical storms.

Paper 2 - Challenges in the Human Environment –

This unit is concerned with human processes, systems and outcomes and how these change both spatially and temporally. They are studied in a variety of places and at a range of scales and must include places in various states of development, such as higher income countries (HICs), lower income countries (LICs) and newly emerging economies (NEEs).

Paper 3 – Geographical applications.

The Geographical applications unit is designed to be synoptic in that students will be required to draw together knowledge, understanding and skills from the full course of study. It is an opportunity for students to show their breadth of understanding and an evaluative appreciation of the interrelationships between different aspects of geographical study.

Students will undertake two geographical enquiries, each of which must include the use of primary data, collected as part of a fieldwork exercise. Fieldwork will take place outside the classroom and Academy grounds on at least two occasions over the GCSE course. The two enquiries will be carried out in contrasting environments and will show an understanding of both the physical and human side of geography. In at least one of the enquiries students will be expected to show an understanding about the interaction between physical and human geography.

What skills you will need to succeed:

You will need to be interested in world issues and keep up with current affairs. You need good literacy and maths skills to achieve the highest grades. You have to analyse and interpret a variety of data and also look at ideas from different viewpoints. Fieldwork is an essential part of the GCSE course.

Careers in Geography

- Cartographer
- Commercial/residential surveyor
- Environmental consultant
- Geographical information systems officer
- Planning and development surveyor
- Secondary school teacher
- Town planner

Where could this subject take me in the future?

A good GCSE pass is useful for all post-16 studies, particularly Geography AS/A2 and any course that includes environmental issues. Employers value the decision making and research skills that are developed through the study of GCSE Geography.



HISTORY - GCSE

(COMPULSORY—CHOOSE GEOGRAPHY OR HISTORY)

Staff Contact: Mr N. Emmett

What does the subject involve?

People who study History are fearless explorers of the past. We investigate past politics, societies, cultures health, education, money, conflicts and more, look at how things have developed over time and connect the dots to understand how we got where we are today.

It might be about the past, but there are plenty of careers in history that you can pursue today. Why study History? Because it's great news for your future!

Assessment Overview:



Conflict and Tension WW1, 1894-1918

Study one of the deadliest global conflicts ever. This unit looks at the complex causes and events of the First World War, as well as why the war was so difficult to end. The war has become famous for its huge death tolls, and new style of warfare never seen before. We will explore these areas as well as studying other crucial fronts of the war, such as Gallipoli and the war at sea.



America 1920-1975: Look how America has changed through the 20th century, including the struggle for equality for African Americans, the Great Depression and how this has shaped the America we know today.



Medicine and health C1000 – present:

A great opportunity to see how the past has shaped our health today. How surgery has developed over time and the lucky discovery of germs and how it had helped us today.



Elizabethan England 1568-1603:

Here We look at a 'Golden Age' in English History. The historic victory over the mighty Spanish Armada, the beginning of the mighty British Empire and the introduction of William Shakespeare, and the theatre to English life.

You'll learn valuable skills...

Apart from studying a wide range of exciting historic periods, you'll learn a range of handy skills that will help you with A-levels and future work. These include:

- excellent communication and writing skills
- how to construct an argument
- research and problem skills
- investigation and problem-solving skills
- analytical and interpretation skills.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Look ahead at possible future careers!

Studying history can lead on to some exciting career options, including:

- Journalism
- Law
- Business
- Politics
- Archaeology



3D DESIGN - GCSE

Staff Contact: Miss G Gratio

What does the subject involve?

This subject involves three-dimensional design, which is defined as the design, prototyping and modelling or making of primarily functional and aesthetic products, objects, and environments, drawing upon intellectual, creative and practical skills. This specification is designed to be taken over two years. This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

This Design specification has been designed to allow students to develop knowledge and understanding during the course through a variety of learning experiences and approaches.

This qualification will suit those students who want to study Design in a hands on, practical way that will help you to develop the knowledge, skills and experience that could open the door to a career in the design industry. The subject will allow them to develop the skills to explore, create and communicate their own ideas. Students will demonstrate these skills through the development, refinement, recording, realisation and presentation of their ideas through a portfolio and by responding to an externally set assignment. The non-exam assessment (NEA) for this specification is a portfolio and externally set assignment. Student must complete both components.



Assessment Overview:

Component 1: Portfolio

What's assessed?

A portfolio that in total shows explicit coverage of the four assessment objectives. It must include a sustained project evidencing the journey from initial engagement to the realisation of intentions and a selection of further work undertaken during the student's course of study.

How it's assessed

No time limit

96 marks - 60% of GCSE

Non-exam assessment (NEA) set and marked by the Academy/college and moderated during a visit. Moderation will normally take place in June.

Component 2: Externally set assignment

What's assessed?

Students respond to their chosen starting point from an externally set assignment paper relating to their subject title, evidencing coverage of all four assessment objectives.

How it's assessed

Preparatory period followed by 10 hours of supervised time
96 marks - 40% of GCSE

Non-exam assessment (NEA) set and marked by the Academy/college and moderated during a visit. Moderation will normally take place in June.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

You can break into the Design industry at any level following your GCSEs. However, you will need to evidence your skills and ideas through your portfolio. The industry is also highly competitive, so further and higher education qualifications could help you stand out. Whatever area of Design you want to get into, you can definitely turn your career into an absolute masterpiece. Three-dimensional design opens the door to lots of exciting careers .

- architectural design
- sculpture
- ceramics
- product design
- jewellery and body adornment
- interior design
- environmental/landscape/garden design
- exhibition design
- 3D digital design
- designs for theatre, film and television



ART (Art, Craft & Design) - GCSE

Staff Contact: Miss G Gratio

What does the subject involve?



This specification is designed to be taken over two years. This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

The specification has been designed to allow students to develop knowledge and understanding during the course through a variety of learning experiences and approaches, including engagement with sources. This will allow them to develop the skills to explore, create and communicate their own ideas. Students will demonstrate these skills through the development, refinement,

recording, realisation and presentation of their ideas through a portfolio and by responding to an externally set assignment. The non-exam assessment (NEA) for this specification is a portfolio and externally set assignment. Student must complete both components.



Assessment Overview:

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A portfolio that in total shows explicit coverage of the four assessment objectives. It must include a sustained project evidencing the journey from initial engagement to the realisation of intentions and a selection of further work undertaken during the student's course of study.

How it's assessed

No time limit

96 marks - 60% of GCSE

Non-exam assessment (NEA) set and marked by the Academy/college and moderated during a visit. Moderation will normally take place in June.

Component 2: Externally set assignment

What's assessed?

Students respond to their chosen starting point from an externally set assignment paper relating to their subject title, evidencing coverage of all four assessment objectives.

How it's assessed

Preparatory period followed by 10 hours of supervised time

96 marks - 40% of GCSE

Non-exam assessment (NEA) set and marked by the Academy/college and moderated during a visit. Moderation will normally take place in June.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

You can break into the art and design industry at any level following your GCSEs. However, you will need to evidence your skills and ideas through your portfolio. The industry is also highly competitive, so further and higher education qualifications could help you stand out. Whatever area of art and design you want to get into, you can definitely turn your career into an absolute masterpiece. Art and design opens the door to lots of exciting careers including:

- Fashion design
- Graphic design
- Animator
- Video game designer
- Illustrator
- Museum curator
- Photographer
- Architecture
- Textiles design
- Ceramics
- Advertising
- Publishing
- Jewellery design
- Artist
- Visual media
- Teaching



BUSINESS

Cambridge OCR GCSE

Staff Contact: Mr P Gittings

What does the subject involve?

GCSE Business helps students understand how real businesses work and why they make the decisions they do. Students learn about marketing, finance, people management, operations and how external factors—such as the economy or ethics—can affect companies.

Lessons are practical and relatable, using real-life examples so students can see how businesses grow, how products are created, and how organisations respond to challenges. This subject is ideal for students who enjoy problem-solving, being creative, and understanding how the world of work operates.



Assessment Overview:

Business (01): Business activity, marketing and people

- Written exam – 1 hour 30 mins – 80 marks – 50%
- This unit introduces students to how businesses start and grow, how they attract customers, and how they manage employees.

Business (02): Operations, finance and influences on business

- Written exam – 1 hour 30 mins – 80 marks – 50%
- Students explore how products are made, how businesses handle money, and how outside factors—like the environment, ethics, the economy and globalisation—affect decision-making.
- *This paper includes synoptic assessment, meaning students bring together knowledge from across the whole course.*

Component	Marks	Duration	Weighting
Business (01): Business activity, marketing and people	80	1 hour 30 mins	50%
Business (02): Operations, finance and influences on business	80	1 hour 30 mins	50%

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Business is useful for any student thinking about working in a modern organisation or starting their own business one day. It builds confidence, communication skills and financial awareness. Studying Business can lead to further courses such as A-Level Business, Economics or Accounting, as well as vocational business qualifications.

Possible future pathways include:

- Marketing and advertising
- Finance or accounting
- Human resources
- Entrepreneurship and running a business
- Management and leadership roles
- Retail, hospitality or customer service
- Project management and administration

Business is a strong foundation for many careers because it helps students understand how organisations work and how decisions are made.



COMPUTER SCIENCE (C Band students only)

Cambridge OCR GCSE

Staff Contact: Mr P Gittings

What does the subject involve?

Computer Science helps students understand how computers work and how technology affects the world around us. The course is a mixture of practical programming and learning the theory behind modern computing.

Students will learn how to write and test programs, how data is stored, how networks operate, and how computers keep information safe. They will also develop problem-solving skills, logical thinking and creativity — all essential for future digital careers.

This subject is ideal for students who enjoy puzzles, coding, understanding how things work, or who are curious about the technology used every day.



Assessment Overview:

Component 1 – Computer Systems

- Written exam – 1 hour 30 mins – 80 marks – 50%
- Students learn about the hardware inside a computer, how data is stored, how networks operate, cybersecurity, and how technology impacts society.

Component 2 – Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming

- Written exam – 1 hour 30 mins – 80 marks – 50%
- Students develop skills in problem-solving and logical thinking. They learn how to create algorithms, write and test code, and apply programming concepts to real problems.

Component	Marks	Duration	Weighting
Component 1 - Computer Systems	80	1 hour 30 mins	50%
Component 2 - Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming	80	1 hour 30 mins	50%

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Computer Science opens doors to a wide range of exciting and fast-growing careers. Students can continue on to A-Level Computer Science, IT, Digital Media or technical apprenticeships.

Possible future pathways include:

- Software development
- Cyber security
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning
- Games design and development
- Robotics and engineering
- Data science and analytics
- Network or systems administration
- Web and app development

As technology continues to grow in every industry, the skills learned in Computer Science are highly valued and can lead to excellent opportunities in education and the workplace.



Drama—GCSE

Staff Contact: Miss H. McNally

What does the subject involve?

Love performing? Passionate about theatre? The **EDUQAS GCSE Drama** course is your chance to shine! This exciting course is perfect for anyone who enjoys acting, directing, or designing. You'll develop confidence, teamwork, and creativity while exploring **practical performance skills, theatre history, and live productions**.

Learners will recreate existing material, as well as devising their own original pieces of Theatre. The specification promotes involvement in and enjoyment of drama, as performers and/or designers. Learners will also attend live theatre performances allowing them to become informed and thoughtful audience members. The course also gives an insight into how the business and production side of the industry works, giving students a broadened view of what working in the performing arts industry actually means.



EDUQAS GCSE Drama is split into the following assessment parts;

Component 1 – Devising Theatre (40%)

Participation in the creation, development and performance of a piece of devised theatre in response to a stimulus.

Component 2 – Performing from a Text (20%)

Act in an already existing play, bringing characters to life in front of an examiner.

Component 3 – Written Exam 1 hour 30 minutes (40%)

Interpreting theatre: Section A: series of questions on one set text. **Section B:** Live Theatre Review, one question requiring analysis and evaluation of a theatre production seen during the two year course.

Assessment Overview:

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Drama contributes to many transferable life skills; focus, confidence and self-esteem which will assist you in any job interview, further study or the workplace.

This course provides students with the foundation to go into; acting, directing, producing. Being a choreographer, teacher, make-up artist, stage designer. Drama can help your memory skills, concentration, self-esteem, conversation, social skills, presentational skills, negotiation skills, leadership skills, creativity, imagination, literacy and written analytical skills.



FOOD PREPARATION & NUTRITION GCSE

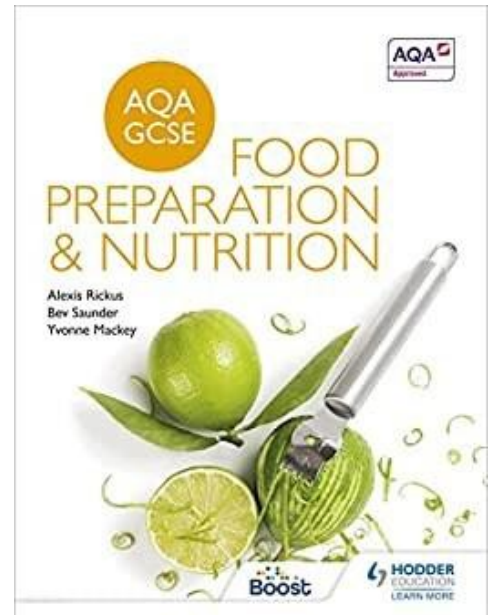
Staff Contact: Miss G Gratio

What does the subject involve?



The GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition course is an exciting and creative course which focuses on practical cooking skills to ensure students develop a thorough understanding of nutrition, food

provenance and the working characteristics of food materials. At its heart, this qualification focuses on nurturing students' practical cookery skills to give them a strong understanding of nutrition.



Food preparation skills are integrated into five core topics:

- Food, nutrition and health
- Food science
- Food safety
- Food choice
- Food provenance.

Assessment Overview:

Paper 1:

Food preparation and nutrition

What's assessed

Theoretical knowledge of food preparation and nutrition from Sections 1 to 5.

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 100 marks
- 50% of GCSE

Questions

Multiple choice questions (20 marks)
Five questions each with a number of sub questions (80 marks)

Non-exam assessment (NEA)

What's assessed

Task 1: Food investigation (30 marks)

Students' understanding of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients.

Practical investigations are a compulsory element of this NEA task.

Task 2: Food preparation assessment (70 marks)

Students' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the planning, preparation, cooking, presentation of food and application of nutrition related to the chosen task.

Students will prepare, cook and present a final menu of three dishes within a single period of no more than three hours, planning in advance how this will be achieved.

How it's assessed

Task 1: Written or electronic report (1,500–2,000 words) including photographic evidence of the practical investigation.

Task 2: Written or electronic portfolio including photographic evidence. Photographic evidence of the three final dishes must be included.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Upon completion of this course, students will be qualified to go on to further study, or embark on an apprenticeship or full time career in the following fields: Catering, Hospitality, Food science, Product development, Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food technologist or Food industries.



PHOTOGRAPHY - GCSE

Staff Contact: Miss G Gratio

What does the subject involve?

The course will cover a broad range of photography techniques. Students will work in one or more of the following areas. They may explore overlapping areas and combinations of areas:

Portraiture, documentary and/or photo-journalism, environmental photography, experimental photography, working from still life and/or from the natural world, and produce ideas and experiments with compositions.

Students must show knowledge and understanding of:

- how ideas, feelings and meanings are conveyed in images and artefacts in their chosen area(s) of photography.
- a range of processes and variety of ways of working related to their chosen area(s) of photography, including, where appropriate, information and communication technology and the use of digital imaging and manipulation software.
- how images and artefacts relevant to their chosen area(s) of study relate to their social, historical and cultural context.
- a variety of approaches, methods and intentions and the contribution of contemporary practitioners and others from different times and cultures to continuity and change in their chosen area(s) of photography.

This course is a stimulating option which relies on a high level of commitment from students to learn at a fast pace needed to pass the course.

It is vital that students have access to at least a digital compact camera (no camera phones) to be able to produce their own images.



Assessment Overview:

Unit 1: Portfolio of Work – 60% of final grade

Students are expected to produce a portfolio of work over the two years, consisting of a minimum of two different projects set by their teacher. Students will be given support through verbal and written feedback to help them make progress throughout the course.

Unit 2: Externally Set Task – 40% of final grade

Students respond to their chosen starting point set by the examination board. Unit 2 will take place during the spring term of year 11. 10 hours of sustained focused study will be carried out by students to create a final piece that is then marked externally.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Photo journalism, commercial photography, wedding photography, digital editing, film editor, film maker.



SPANISH - GCSE

Staff Contact: Mrs A. Spiers

What does the subject involve?



In today's society the study of languages is increasingly important and employment opportunities in Europe and around the world are a real possibility. Furthermore, both Colleges and Universities regard a GCSE qualification in Modern Languages very favourably and for some it is even becoming a requirement.

In your GCSE you will build on the work you have experienced at Key Stage 3.

You will develop valuable communication skills along with the ability to listen and read in your chosen language. You will also be able to produce accurate and detailed written work and explore different cultures along with life in other countries.

Theme 1: People and Lifestyle

Topics:

1. Identity and relationships with others
2. Healthy living and lifestyle
3. Education and work

Theme 2: Popular Culture

Topics:

1. Free-time activities
2. Customs, festivals and celebrations
3. Celebrity culture

Theme 3: Communication and the world around us

Topics:

1. Travel and tourism, including places of interest
2. Media and technology
3. The environment and where people live



Assessment Overview:

FULL COURSE - you will be assessed at Foundation or Higher tier in the following skills:

Paper 1: Listening	25%
Paper 2: Speaking	25%
Paper 3: Reading	25%
Paper 4: Writing	25%

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Translating and interpreting, media and fashion, teaching, work in the travel and tourism industry, politician, lawyer, banking and many more.



Triple Science - GCSE (C Band students only)

Staff Contact: Mr U. Makda

What does the subject involve?



Changes to the GCSE Science specification have updated the course to reflect new and emerging technologies, as well as strengthening the focus on scientific skills and knowledge. The Triple Science course leads to three separate GCSE qualifications in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, allowing students to study each subject in greater depth than in the Combined Science course.

Triple Science covers many of the core topics from previous GCSE courses but includes additional content to extend understanding and better prepare students for further study in science. Some topics have been revised, while others have been added to reflect advances in technology and recent scientific discoveries.

There is also a strong emphasis on mathematical skills within Triple Science. Biology includes at least 10% mathematical content, Chemistry at least 20%, and Physics at least 30%. Students will apply these skills through the use of equations, graph interpretation, and data analysis, helping them to develop the analytical abilities required for advanced scientific study.

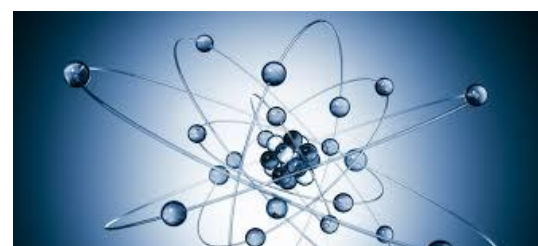


Assessment Overview:

Students studying Triple Science will be assessed through two examination papers for each discipline: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics — resulting in six papers in total. Unlike Combined Science, students will receive three separate GCSE grades, one for each subject.

A range of question styles will be used to assess mathematical skills, including multi-step calculations, open-ended problems, rearranging equations, and converting units. Students will also be required to recall and apply a greater number of equations, particularly in Physics.

Each paper (6 in total) will be 1hr and 45 minutes long.



Where could this subject take me in the future?

Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, Pharmacy, Engineering, Forensic Science, Environmental Science, Psychology, Biomedical Science; Astrophysics, Nursing, Radiography, Computer Science, Teaching



CREATIVE I-MEDIA CAMBRIDGE NATIONAL

What does the subject involve?

Staff Contact: Mr P. Gittings

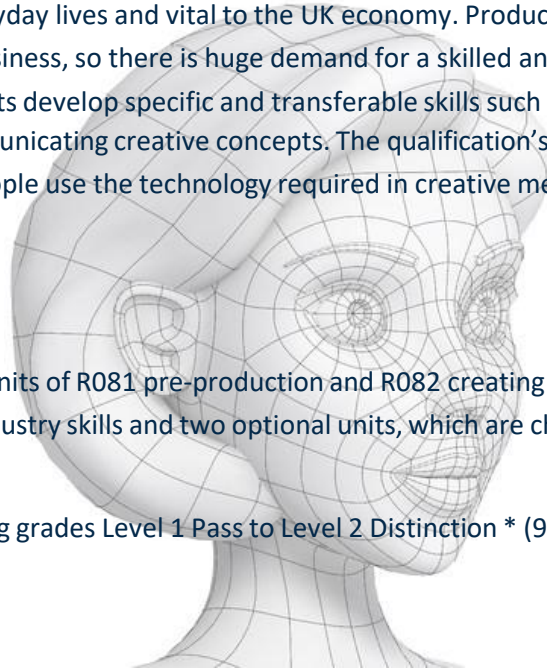
<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/cambridge-nationals/creative-imedia-level-1-2-award-certificate-j807-j817/>

Digital Media is a key part of many areas of our everyday lives and vital to the UK economy. Production of digital media products is a requirement of almost every business, so there is huge demand for a skilled and digitally-literate workforce. This qualification will help students develop specific and transferable skills such as research, planning and review, working with others and communicating creative concepts. The qualification's hands-on approach has strong relevance to the way young people use the technology required in creative media.

Assessment Overview:

The course is made up of four units. two mandatory units of R081 pre-production and R082 creating digital graphics underpin the qualification and reflect key industry skills and two optional units, which are chosen to suit the needs of the students completing the course.

This course is an equivalent GCSE and is assessed using grades Level 1 Pass to Level 2 Distinction * (9-1 equivalency)



Unit	Assessment Type	Weighting (100%)
R081 – pre production	Compulsory External Exam – 1hr 15min	25%
R082 – creating digital graphics	Compulsory – internal assessed / externally moderated coursework	25%
2 further Options units from the list below		
R083: Creating 2D and 3D digital characters R084: Storytelling with a comic strip R085: Creating a multipage website R086: Creating a digital animation R087: Creating interactive multimedia R088: Creating a digital sound R091: Designing a game concept R092: Developing digital games	Internal assessed / externally moderated coursework	25% x 2 = 50%

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Cambridge Nationals in Creative i-Media are media-sector focused, including film, television, web development, gaming and animation, and have IT at their heart. As a worker of the future, the ability to analyse and design systems that are used in the workplace, the ability to see relationships and the broader perspective, to develop your project management skills and understand the need for team management will all be important and marketable skills. This qualification is useful to students intending to follow Level 3 courses in media and IT. Examples include Cambridge Technical IT or Media courses, BTEC IT qualifications, Media Studies and the Apprenticeship Framework.



MUSIC PRACTICE

BTEC Level 1/2 Technical Award

Staff Contact: Miss H Brayshaw

What does the subject involve?

This award gives students the opportunity to develop music sector-specific knowledge and skills in a practical learning environment.

- This course will give you the chance to engage with music through a range of performing, composing and production tasks.
- You will develop your music appreciation skills for a wide range of music from classical through to modern day
- from around the world.
- You will look at a range of jobs in the music industry.
- You will get the chance to develop your performance skills on your chosen instrument/voice.
- You will get a chance to develop your composition and production skills on the DAW.

Assessment Overview:

BTEC Music will be delivered at KS4 which is a vocational course. The course is assessed with coursework as opposed to one an end of year exam. BTEC Music is split into the following assessments parts;

Component 1: 30% of overall grade.

Learners produce a portfolio which will explore the techniques used in the creation of different musical products and investigate the key features of different musical styles. This component is internally marked.

Component 2: 30% of overall grade.

Learners will have the opportunity to develop two musical disciplines through engagement in practical tasks, while documenting their progress and planning for further improvement. This component is internally marked.

Component 3: 40% of overall grade.

A synoptic assignment externally marked where you will apply the skills learned in Component 1 and Component 2 to respond to a brief.

Learners will be given the opportunity to develop and present music in response to a given music brief. Performing and composing using instruments or composing and producing using the DAW to create stylistically accurate cover versions. Creating original music using existing stylistic frameworks and traits on either instruments or the DAW. To create an original piece of music from a given starting point.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

The music industry is constantly evolving and offers many different and exciting new work opportunities. These jobs include:

Professional musician/performer, music producer, working in theatres, music session performer, booking agent, working in a recording studio, music education, music therapist, music journalist, song writing, composing, live music entertainment, supporting live performances in sound or set up, music production, artist/music management, marketing and PR.

Even if you don't go into the music industry, employers value these key skills gained from studying music: confidence raising, teamwork, empathy and understanding, hard work, commitment and creativity.





HEALTH & FITNESS

NCFE Level 1/2 Technical

Staff Contacts: Mr M. Lindley



What does the subject involve?

The course aims to:

Focus on the study of the health and fitness sector.

Offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge.

Provide opportunities to acquire a number of practical and technical skills.



Assessment Overview:

NCFE Health and Fitness will be delivered at KS4 and is a vocational course, not 100% terminal examination.

60% of the assessed work is a synoptic assessment where students will be able to use their classwork and research over a six week period to answer a specific scenario.

40% is a terminal examination at the end of Y11.

Topics studied include:

- Structure and function of body systems.
- Effects of health and fitness activities on the body.
- The components of fitness.
- Principles of training.
- Testing and developing fitness.
- Impact of lifestyle on fitness.
- Analyse fitness and set goals.
- Structure of a health and fitness programme.

Where could this subject take me in the future?

Students seeking college placements may find these qualifications useful as topics covered are used in A-Level and other vocational sports courses. Coaching companies would find the practical elements of the vocational course useful when planning and delivering session to younger generations. Anyone interested in working in the health and fitness centre such as gymnasiums and leisure centres would find these courses useful.



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award

Staff Contact: Mr M. Lindley

What does the subject involve?

About three million people work in health and social care. Healthcare roles include doctors, pharmacists, nurses, midwives and healthcare assistants, while social care roles include care assistants, occupational therapists, counsellors and administrators. Together, they account for nearly one in ten of all paid jobs in the UK. Demand for both health and social care is likely to rise, so they will continue to play a key role in UK society and the demand for people to carry out these vital roles will increase.



Considering how care services have developed and how they are organised, the ways in which people can access services and the barriers to this. You will also study the main roles and skills of the people providing health, social care and early year's services and the principles of care and the values that underpin all care work.

Health and Social Care is ideal for students who are considering a career in Nursing or being a Care Worker and will allow students to experience the practical aspects of Health and Social as well as learning through taught sessions

and the completion of a research task. There is also a written exam.

Content Overview:

- Skills and processes, such as interpreting data to assess an individual's health, and designing a plan to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Attitudes, namely the care values that are vitally important in the sector, and the opportunity to practise applying them.
- Knowledge that underpins the effective use of skills, processes and attitudes, including human growth and development,

Assessment Overview:

NCFE Health and Social Care will be delivered at KS4 which is a vocational course.

The course is assessed with coursework and an exam. The coursework will make up 50% of the overall grade and this will be done through mini controlled assessments in year 11. The mini controlled assessments are timed and you will have a specific number of lessons to complete all the tasks in the assignment. The remaining 50% of the course is assessed in an exam where you will apply your knowledge and understanding from all of the eight content areas you learn in year 10 and 11.

Content areas and assessment include:

1. Health and Social care Provision and services,
2. Job roles and care values in health care
3. Legislation and policies
4. Human development
5. Care needs of individuals
6. Assessing of health and social care
7. Working partnerships in health and social care
8. The care planning cycle.

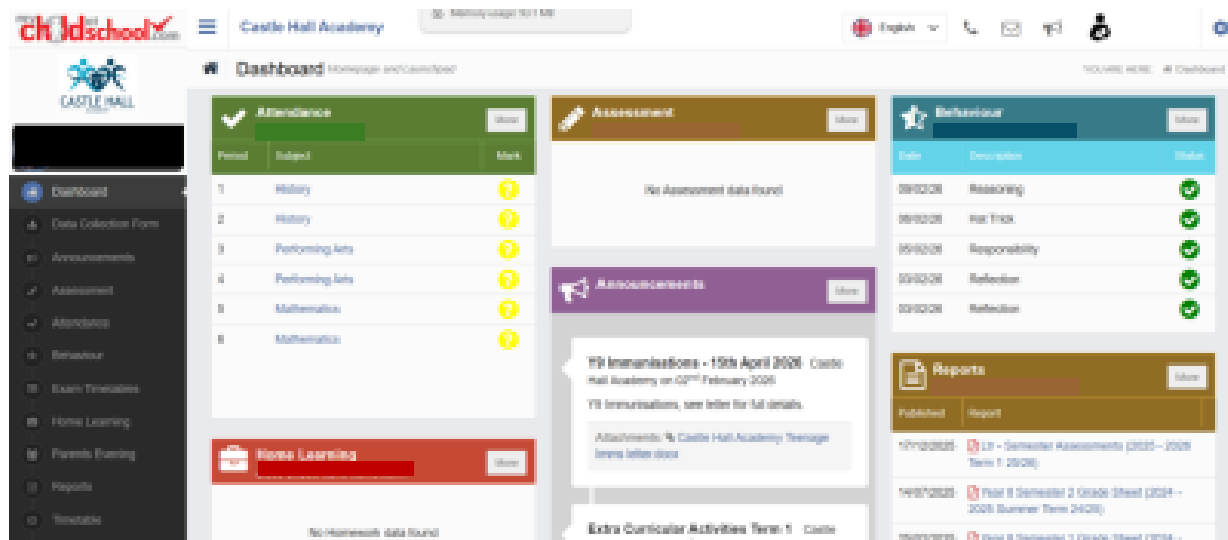
Where could this subject take me in the future?

This course provides a good foundation for those students who may go on to:

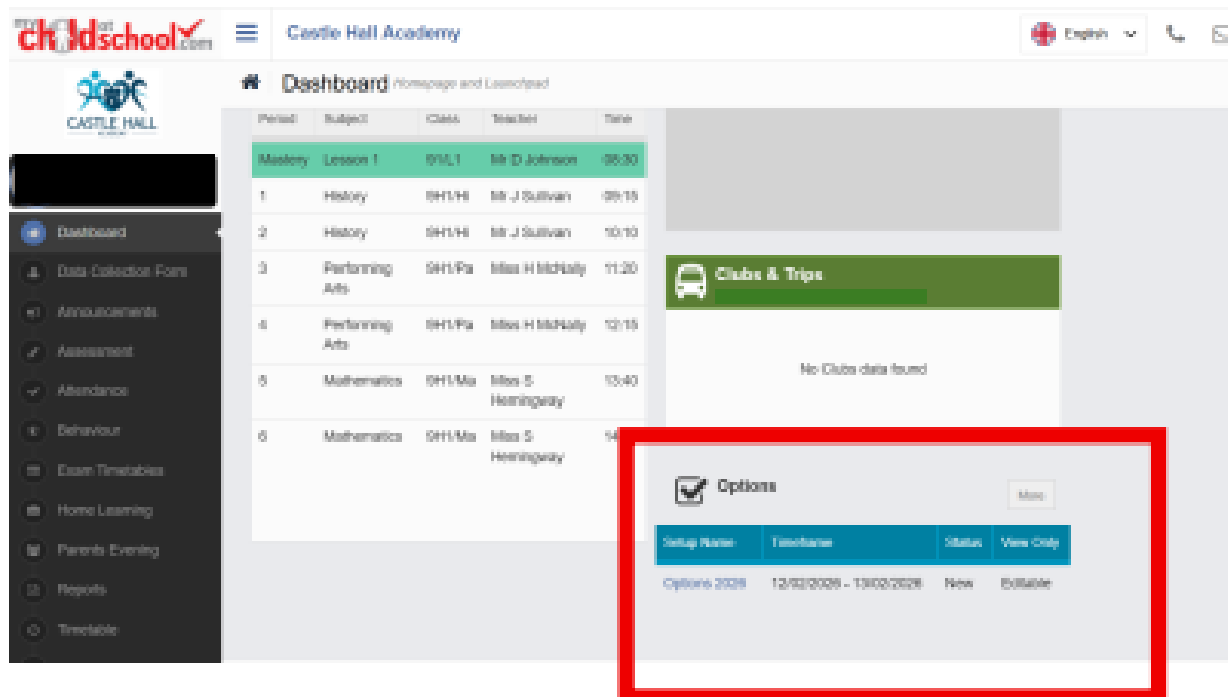
Nursing & Health Care Professions, Nursery Nurse, Early Years Teaching, Pre-School, and Child-minding, Social Services Professionals or Work with the Elderly & Disabled.

MCAS Option Choices via web browser

Open homepage



Scroll down to the bottom – you should see a blue 'Options' box



Click on the Options link



On the first page, use the drop down menu to choose between Geography or History and then click next

Castle Hall Academy logo and name at the top. Below is a blue header with 'Options 2026' and 'Please' followed by a progress indicator showing three steps, with the first step (1) highlighted. The main content area is white and contains a red-bordered box around the 'Main choice' dropdown menu. Below the dropdown is a 'Next' button, also highlighted with a red box. The text 'Common subject: Total Main Choices: 1 Total Reserves: 2' is visible at the top of the form.

On the next page you will now choose your first two choices, and two reserves. Use the drop down box for choice 1 to make your first choice, choice 2 box to make your second choice, and then the two reserve choices for if we cannot accommodate your first choices.

Castle Hall Academy logo and name at the top. Below is a blue header with 'Options 2026' and 'Please' followed by a progress indicator showing three steps, with the second step (2) highlighted. The main content area is white and contains a red-bordered box around the 'Options' section. This section includes 'Choice 1', 'Choice 2', 'Reserve 1', and 'Reserve 2' dropdown menus. Below the dropdowns is a red-bordered box containing the text: 'Add at least 2 reserve subjects from Group Options, Select maximum 2 reserve subjects from Group Options'. The text 'Common subject: Total Main Choices: 1 Total Reserves: 2' is visible at the top of the form.

This page will appear blue when it is complete. Then click the 'next' button at the bottom

Your choices will now appear as a list. Please make sure the choices are all correct, and in the correct order of choice

Options 2026
Name:
Candidate name: [redacted] Total Main Choices: 2 Total Reserves: 2

1 — 2 — 3

Please check your subject order of preference before submitting. [Set Preference](#)

Main Choices [\(Select only 1 subject from this group\)](#) [Edit](#)

- Geography [Preference 1](#)

Options [\(Select 2 subjects from this group - Option 1 - Select option 2 - Reserve subject that is your option\)](#) [Edit](#)

- Art [Preference 1](#)
- Design [Preference 2](#)
- H1. Health & Social Care [Reserve 1](#)
- H2. Performing Arts [Reserve 2](#)

This form can only be submitted once and cannot be changed later. If you need to re-apply, you will need to start the form from the start. If you go back, the preferences will be reset. You may need to check the preferences again.

[Previous](#) [Save for later](#) **Submit**

Once you are happy, click 'submit' and a further message will pop up

!

Do you want to continue?

This action will submit your choices permanently with the following order of preference:

- Main Choices
 - Geography
 - Art
 - Design
- Reserves
 - Health & Social Care
 - Performing Arts

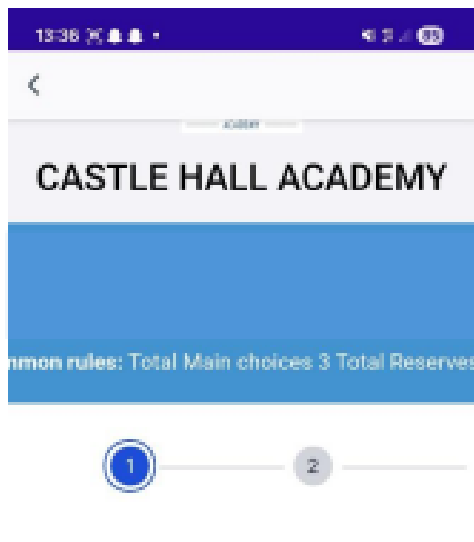
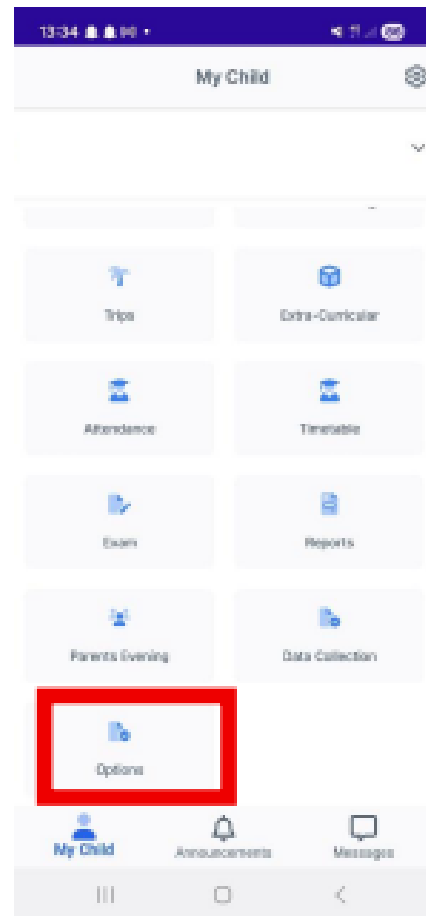
If you want to change the order of preference please go back and click on "Set Preference" button.

[Cancel](#) **Proceed**

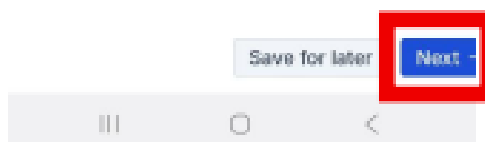
Once you click proceed, your options will be saved and cannot be changed. Your choices have now been submitted.

MCAS Option Choices via app

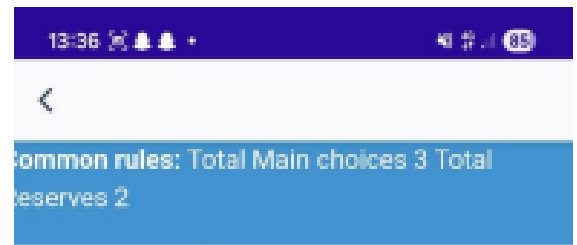
Open the app and click on the Options link



On the first page, use the drop down menu to choose between Geography or History and then click next



On the next page you will now choose your first two choices, and two reserves. Use the drop down box for choice 1 to make your first choice, choice 2 box to make your second choice, and then the two reserve choices for if we cannot accommodate your first choices.



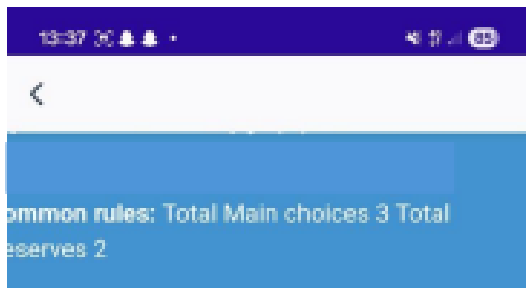
Options

Select 2 subjects from Group Options • Select maximum 2 reserve subjects from Group Options

Choice 1	Choice 2
Select Item ▾	Select Item ▾
Reserve 1	Reserve 2
Select Item ▾	Select Item ▾

Rule not met: Select 2 subjects from Group Options., Select maximum 2 reserve subjects from Group Options

Previous Save for later **Next →**



Options

Select 2 subjects from Group Options • Select maximum 2 reserve subjects from Group Options

Choice 1	Choice 2
Art × ▾	Business GCSE × ▾
Reserve 1	Reserve 2
Food × ▾	Design × ▾

Previous Save for later **Next →**



This page will appear blue when it is complete. Then click the 'next' button at the bottom

Your choices will now appear as a list. Please make sure the choices are all correct, and in the correct order of choice

A screenshot of a mobile application interface. At the top, the status bar shows the time 13:37 and various icons. Below is a navigation bar with a back arrow. The main content area is divided into two sections. The first section is titled 'Humanities' and contains a text box with the instruction 'Select only 1 subject from Group Humanities' and an 'Edit' button. Below this is a radio button for 'History' and a 'Preference 1' button. The second section is titled 'Options' and contains a text box with the instruction 'Select 2 subjects from Group Options + Select maximum 2 reserve subjects from Group Options' and an 'Edit' button. Below this are four radio buttons: 'Art' (with 'Preference 2' button), 'Business GCSE' (with 'Preference 3' button), 'R1. Food' (with 'Reserve' button), and 'R2. Design' (with 'Reserve' button).

This form can only be submitted once and cannot be changed later. If you would like to modify it, use the save for later button. If you go back, the preferences will be reset. You may need to check the preferences again

A screenshot of the bottom navigation bar of the mobile application. It features three buttons: 'Previous', 'Save for later', and 'Submit'. The 'Submit' button is highlighted with a red rectangular box. Below the buttons is a standard Android navigation bar with three icons: a hamburger menu, a circle, and a back arrow.

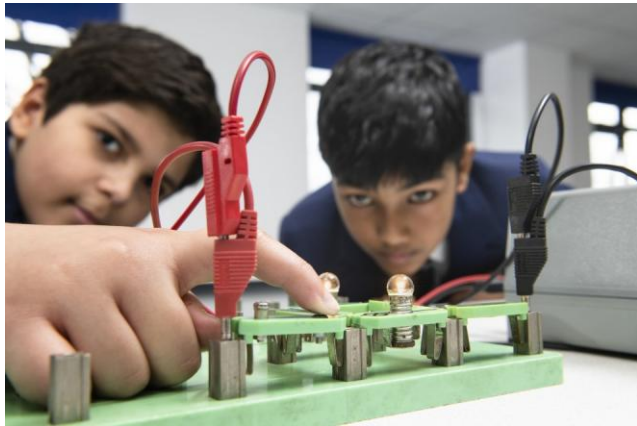
Once you are happy, click 'submit' and a further message will pop up

A screenshot of a mobile application showing a confirmation dialog box. At the top, the status bar shows the time 13:37. The dialog box has a white background with a grey border and a large orange exclamation mark icon. The text inside reads: 'Do you want to continue?' followed by 'This action will submit your choices permanently with the following order of preference:'. Below this, the preferences are listed under two headings: 'Main Choices' (History, Art, Business GCSE) and 'Reserves' (Food, Design). A note at the bottom says: 'If you want to change the order of preference please go back and click on "Set Preference" button.' At the bottom of the dialog are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'Proceed'. The 'Proceed' button is highlighted with a red rectangular box. Below the dialog, the bottom of the previous screen is visible, showing the 'Humanities' section and the 'Submit' button.

Once you click proceed, your options will be saved and cannot be changed. Your choices have now been submitted.

OPTIONS AFTER YEAR 11

Before choosing your options in year 9 you will want to think about what you will do after year 11. Find out what you need to think about, such as your skills and interests, the subjects you're good at and the ones you might need. **ckcareersonline** has lots of information for you on employment, education, apprenticeships, training and more.



There's lots of ways to get in touch on the website, where you can speak to an adviser for help moving forward. Learn more at www.ckcareersonline.org.uk



PARENTAL CONTACT



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Mr Johnson

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Academic Excellence



Developing Character



Raising Aspiration

