

Year 9 Options FAQs

Please find below our frequently asked questions from the Y9 Zoom presentation. We have also included others that are frequently asked by students in school.

Questions about the content of the choices

Can you explain a little more about the EBacc subjects and what EBacc is?

EBacc is a shorthand for a suite of subjects that it is the government's intention the majority of students should study. These are English (Language and Literature), Maths, Sciences, Humanities (History or Geography) and a Modern Foreign Language.

Does my child have to do all the EBacc subjects?

No. One of the options is a guided choice between History, Geography and either French or Spanish but the other choices are free choices.

Do students have to take a language?

We strongly recommend and the Head of Year will see students who are capable of studying a language but who are choosing not to take this option to ensure they are making an informed decision. However, students do not have to take a language.

Can students study a language that they haven't studied in Y7/8/9?

This is unlikely, however, we would look at this on an individual basis. A student may for example speak more than one language at home and therefore be capable of picking this up at GCSE.

Are EBacc subjects 'better' than the other subjects?

No. The EBacc subjects ensure that all students have a core academic diet that will set them up to be successful well rounded and knowledgeable adults. However, all subjects are highly valued by the school, and students should be guided by their passions and interests as well as by the EBacc options.

Which institutions/courses would ask for the EBacc subjects?

Given the government's intention that the majority of students study the full suit of EBacc subjects you must consider how your portfolio of qualifications will compare with others when applying for the most competitive universities or jobs in the future. Many students across the country will study the full EBacc which is why we ask those of you who are capable and more likely to be applying for these opportunities in the future.

Why do students have to do 1 hour of RE and Personal Development, but this doesn't lead to a GCSE?

Students are required to study Religious Education at KS3 and 4 along with Personal Development which includes careers education. Students who wish to take RE at A-level can choose to study this during twilight sessions which will then lead to a GCSE qualification.

Can students who are struggling with English and Maths drop the RE and Personal Development lessons to concentrate on these subjects?

No. The additional support for English and Maths within the normal timetable comes with studying combined (dual) science in Year 11 rather than separate science GCSEs. RE and PD are a statutory requirement for all students to study in KS3 and 4.

Why are the RE and Citizenship GCSEs twilights?

All students will study a period a week of RE and a period a week of personal development – which covers PHSE (Personal, Social and Health Education including careers) as core, non-examined subjects. We know that some students may wish to do a tenth GCSE in either RE or Citizenship which is why these subjects will build on the core periods in the week during a twilight session after normal school hours. This approach ensures all students receive the statutory teaching in RE and PSHE whilst allowing those desiring to do so to develop one of these subjects to GCSE

Which day of the week will the twilights be on?

We can't confirm this until we have developed the timetable for the whole school and know the numbers of students interested in the twilight options.

Can my child do both RE and Citizenship after school?

This will not be possible as the timetable and staffing do not allow for students to access both courses.

How many GCSEs does my child have to take?

Most will take 9. Those taking a twilight will take 10. A minority will do 8 if they change to combined science instead of triple Science – a decision that will be taken at the end of year 10. A very small minority may do fewer than 8 in discussion with SLT, parents and carers, the student and the SENCo.

What is the difference between a BTEC and a GCSE?

Primarily it is about the way the subjects are assessed. BTEC courses involve a larger amount of coursework, and assessment can be ongoing throughout the course, whilst GCSEs mainly involve 100% final exam, other than those practical subjects with a coursework element. BTecs are designed to be of a similar difficulty to GCSEs and are open to all abilities.

Can you explain the Science choices?

All students will start Year 10 following a triple Science course in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, with six periods a week and working towards 3 GCSEs. At the end of Year 10, some will move on to do Combined Science – still covering the 3 disciplines in Science but with reduced content leading to two GCSEs in Science. These students will have Science for 4 periods a week in y11, with room to do a period of extra English and Maths. Computer Science is an option in its own right, separate to this. The decision of who will be moved to the combined course will be made by subject staff.

Can students be entered for a GCSE through school if they have been privately tutored in a subject? Can this be something offered in school, but that students didn't take as an option?

Yes, but this would have to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. If this is something you would like to pursue, contact school through form tutor or the enquiries email.

Questions about the process and support offered

What is the support for my child to make their choices?

Students have listened to talks in form time and assemblies, have the option booklet and support at home, and are able to ask for an interview with staff in school to refine their choices further. They are also able to talk to their subject teachers and form teachers if needed. Y9 parents' evening will be on 26th January 2022 for discussions with teachers on student progress. 1-to-1 meetings will occur for some students in Feb-March.

Why is the deadline for submission form options forms?

Friday 25th February 2022

When will we know whether my child is going to be able to take their choices?

We do everything possible to try and ensure students are able to take their first choice of subjects, but in a small number of cases we are unable to do this. This is why we ask students to provide a reserve choice on their options form. We will communicate final allocations by June when we have timetabled for next academic year.

What careers advice will my child receive?

Students have been working on careers in form time. This will also be part of the Personal Development curriculum through Y10 and 11.

What is Kudos and how do we access this?

Kudos is a computer package that we had intended to use with all students to help give them more information about post 16 and beyond choices. Unfortunately, this external service has been beset by issues beyond our control and we are looking at a different provider in the new year.