

Year 9 Options FAQs

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. All of their options can be from the EBacc subjects though (ie, geography, history and a language).

Do students have to take a language?

We strongly recommend that students who are capable of studying a language do so. 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 Personal Development, but this doesn't lead to a GCSE?

Students are required to study Personal Development at both key stage 3 and 4 as a statutory requirement. This is to ensure non examined aspects of the curriculum such as sex and relationships education, careers and British values are covered. Elements of the personal development curriculum are covered in the Citizenship GCSE which runs as a twilight course, but this would not follow the statutory requirements of personal development.

Why is RE compulsory and is it examined?

It is a statutory requirement of schools to provide RE education for students. We have decided as a school to follow a GCSE course in this subject to allow students to gain another GCSE from their studies

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

No, these are statutory parts of the curriculum. 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 is the Citizenship GCSE a twilight?

All students will study a period a week of personal development to cover the statutory PHSE (personal, health, social and economic) curriculum. This will include the statutory careers and sex and relationships education. The GCSE in Citizenship is an opportunity to extend this important part of the curriculum and gain an additional 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.

How many GCSEs does my child have to take?

Most will take 10. Those taking a twilight course in Citizenship will take 11. A minority will do 9 if they change to combined science instead of triple Science (a decision that will be taken at the end of year 10 by staff in the science department).

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 (one in each of the sciences). 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. The decision of who will be moved to the combined course will be made by subject staff.

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 and are recognised in the same way as GCSEs by post 16 providers.

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 (enquiries@bradfield.sheffield.sch.uk).

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 questions in specific lessons to gain further insight into each of the subjects. Y9 parents' evening will be on 17th January 2023 for discussions with teachers on student progress. Students can speak to their form tutor, head of year or a member of the senior leadership team to gain further help and guidance.

How does my child submit their choices?

They will be given a paper copy of the options form in tutor time on 16th January (there is a copy of this at the back of the options booklet if you wish to look at it prior to these being issued). This should be completed, signed by parents/carers and handed back to reception.

When is the deadline for submission form options forms?

Friday 10th February 2023.

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 can be down to numbers of students opting for subjects (eg, some subjects have limited numbers due to health and safety) or being unable to timetable some combinations of subjects. 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.

How are students supported through the exams?

Some students will qualify for extra time or other concessions in their exams if they have additional needs. During the autumn of Y10, 'access testing' will take place through our SEND department to ensure those students that need concessions receive it.

In addition to this, some students may feel anxious during and in the run up to the Y11 exams and mock exams. We have support for this in place in school, through the website and other online services we can signpost students to. If you feel your child is suffering with school or exam related anxiety, you should alert school through the form tutor in the first instance.

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. Students will receive at least one careers interview whilst at school.