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Dear Parent/Guardian

A level Decision

You will be aware that up until now students in Year 12 have chosen four subjects they wish to follow at AS level, continuing with three at A2 in Year 13.

From September 2016 our core offer for Sixth Form will be three A Levels that will be assessed at the end of the two year period - Linear A Levels. This affects Year 11 students choosing their options subjects for September 2016 entry.

The current Year 12 students will continue to work towards AS Levels to be examined in May 2016 and a mixture of A2 or Linear A Level exams in May 2017, depending on the subject.

This does not directly affect our vocational offer but may have an impact on the combinations students following this pathway consider.

As shared with Year 11 students last week, it has not been possible to make this decision any earlier but it has become an easier decision in light of recent information. Up until this point universities indicated that AS grades were useful indicators of student aptitude and they formed the basis of their offers to students, but are now adapting to the huge numbers of student nationally who do not have AS results. A significant number of our students go on to further their studies at university.

At the same time A Level and AS Level specifications have changed, in some cases considerably. We now have the experience of teaching a significant number of these new specifications and, more importantly, understanding the demands these bring. Indeed, this combined with consultations with colleagues, professional bodies, universities and exam boards has ensured this is an informed decision.

Our vocational or BTEC offer remains largely unchanged. Students will still be able to study a two A Level equivalent in Business and Health & Social Care, with a new 1.5 A Level equivalent available in Art & Design and ICT. A single A Level equivalent is available in Art & Design, ICT and Business. Clearly the focus here is on vocation, and for that reason we would strongly encourage all BTEC students to undertake a highly valuable work placement. This can be on a weekly basis or for a sustained period of time out of school. BTECs can continue to be combined with A Levels.

We have compiled some frequently asked questions that are likely to arise as a result of this decision. We understand that there may be further questions arising from this announcement so if your question isn't answered, please contact us using the email address overleaf.

Yours sincerely

Mrs F Lewis
Assistant Headteacher

Mr N Lamb
Assistant Headteacher
Director of 6th Form

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FAQ

Can I study any AS Levels from September 2016

No, we will only be offering A Levels. The exceptions to this are:

- The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which will be offered to students in Term 6 of Year 12. This is viewed favourably by universities and carries significant UCAS points;
- AS level Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Media Studies, Government & Politics, Design & Technology – Product Design, Food Technology and Textiles. The new linear courses start in September 2017 for these subjects.

I want to study four A Levels. Can I?

If you achieve five A* grades or more at GCSE and achieve A or A* grades in the subjects you wish to study, then you can.

Are there any subjects that are considered Legacy qualification? i.e. not the new specifications? Does this matter?

All subjects taught at Wallingford School will be the new specifications (Reformed) with the exception of Maths, Further Maths, Media Studies, Government & Politics, Design & Technology – Product Design, Food Technology and Textiles. Students will sit an AS Level in these subjects at the end of year 12 and A2 examinations at the end of year 13.

I would like to study a BTEC qualification alongside an A Level. Is that possible?

Yes. You could study a "Double Option" BTEC alongside an A Level or two A Levels and a "Single Option" BTEC. We would expect students studying a vocational subject to undertake some work experience to complement their studies. Please ensure that you have checked if the course you are following is worth one, one and a half or two A Level equivalency.

I want to follow the Vocational route. How does this affect me?

It doesn't hugely. You can still opt for BTEC subjects and not opt for A Level subjects. However it is very important that you have checked if the course you are following is worth one, one and a half or two A Level equivalency. This may be important depending on your plans post Sixth Form. Work experience is particularly valuable to you and you will want to consider where you might undertake this activity.

In light of this announcement I want to change my options subjects on my Sixth Form application. How do I do this?

Simply contact the main office for a replacement form or email chongw@wallingfordschool.com and we will make the change for you. Be sure to list your subjects in the order of preference.

My question is not answered in your FAQ. What do I do next?

Please contact Mr Lamb, Assistant Head and Director of Sixth Form on lambn@wallingfordschool.com or Mrs Lewis, Assistant Head, lewisf@wallingfordschool.com.

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