
TIPS FOR STARTING SIXTH FORM

Written by Sixth Form Students



IN THIS VIRTUAL
WELCOME PACK...

**INFORMATION ABOUT
THE VYNERS SIXTH
FORM**

**SUBJECT-SPECIFIC
PRODUCTIVITY TIPS TO
HELP YOU WITH YOUR
EXAMS**

**MANAGING
WORKLOAD AND
STRESS**

What does Vyners Sixth Form have to offer?

The Sixth Form at Vyners is one where every student is treated equally and much like an adult. With the jobs market being more competitive than ever, it is becoming increasingly important to be able to thrive under pressure. Attending a Sixth Form like Vyners will equip you with the skills that you need to succeed in the adult world. With such supportive, passionate and dedicated teachers you will never feel alone as they will be there to guide you through every step: from post-18 education, to academic and pastoral advice.

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Art and Design A-Level Advice



BY LUKE MERVYN

During your A-Level in Art, you will produce a sketchbook as a visual recording of the ideas you have, the artists you study and the mediums you experiment with. Additionally, you will produce larger works outside of your sketchbook and in year 13 you will undertake a personal study, which is a critical, analytical essay on a topic of your choice (although the prospect of writing an art essay may seem daunting at first, your teachers will help you plan your essay and will provide you with regular feedback). The subject is largely coursework based, with one exam at the end of year 13 where you have three days to produce a large piece of artwork. Although Art has a large workload, it is hugely rewarding to see your artistic skills develop throughout the course and to produce some artwork that you can treasure.

1. Take some time to visit art galleries over the summer holidays. Given the current situation, this might be difficult to do in person, but lots of galleries are offering virtual tours. The benefits of a virtual tour are that you can see artwork in galleries around the world. The National Gallery, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Louvre in Paris all offer virtual tours. In your A-Level sketchbook, you need to demonstrate evidence of first-hand responses to subject matter and artwork, demonstrated through drawings, photographs and annotated sketches from exhibitions or gallery visits. However, visiting galleries may also inspire you to research an artist you hadn't come across before, or to use a medium you hadn't previously considered experimenting with.
2. To prevent your projects feeling like a repeat of GCSE Art as you move into year 12, over the summer experiment with an array of media, techniques and processes. I enjoyed trying to draw and paint on material which I wouldn't normally use, such as textured paper and tracing paper. I also took inspiration from the artist Paula Swisher, who draws birds on the pages of books, and started drawing and painting on text-based materials like the pages of newspaper.
3. The main challenge with A-Level Art is the workload, which is consistently large due to the fact coursework is worth 60% of your final grade. One thing to note is that if you are running out of time to complete an art piece, just ensure one area of it is completed to a really high standard, to demonstrate that you are capable of displaying high level skills and creativity. Then, if you have time later on, you can come back to the unfinished piece and carry on completing the other areas. Don't procrastinate doing your Art homework - if you are really struggling to make a start, put on your favourite TV programme or film and do your artwork in front of it - being able to have something you enjoy in the background should motivate you to do some work. My favourite sketchbook page in my A-Level Art sketchbook is a photo collage which took me ten hours to complete while watching TV across two evenings - you definitely can't tell it took ten hours when you look at it, but every photo, annotation and brush stroke was considered and carefully placed on the page.
4. Don't be too stubborn. It is easy to become defensive of your own project when you've spent a lot of time trying to make it the best it can be, but make sure you listen to the constructive feedback your teachers offer you and then act on it accordingly. Your teachers will know more than you about how to achieve the highest marks so don't ignore their comments.

Biology A-Level Advice

BY SIMRAN PUNN



Students who take A level Biology find the content very interesting. My favourite part of the course were the practicals in year 13, as they were more complex than those in year 12. They ranged from analysing DNA samples, to investigating the effectiveness of antibiotics. All practicals in year 13 and some in year 12 involved longer write ups where you would reference findings from journals to support your conclusions. Write ups may be challenging but keep in mind there are plenty of opportunities to master this skill! Biology isn't an essay based subject but requires longer answers in the exam (e.g 9 markers in year 13). There are also analysis questions around 5/6 marks which require detail to achieve full marks. The topics you will study are listed below. 1-4 is for year 12, 5-8 is for year 13 (see spec for more details):

Topic 1: Lifestyle, Health and Risk; Topic 2: Genes and Health; Topic 3: Voice of the Genome; Topic 4: Biodiversity and Natural Resources; Topic 5: On the Wild Side; Topic 6: Immunity, Infection, Forensics; Topic 7: Run for your life; Topic 8: Grey Matter.

Some top tips on starting A level Biology:

1. Make revision resources such as notes, flashcards etc, as you learn new content. There is lots to remember in biology - making no resources in year 12 will have an impact on how easy or difficult year 13 can get. I found spec notes were the most effective resource. I would write each spec point down and summarise all relevant information for each point from the textbook.
2. Textbooks are different from revision guides. The textbook has lots of questions for each subtopic, information which applies content into real life examples and pages at the end of each chapter which are essential for paper 3 revision (see spec for more info on the A level papers). If you are struggling with the details of the textbooks, then buy the CGP revision guides but ensure you use them alongside the textbook as they are written by the exam board so they contain all relevant information.
3. The key to doing well in exams is to practice exam questions! Use the website 'physics and maths tutor' - type in PMT Edexcel A level biology (A) questions (you are biology A not biology B). Biology exam questions can require specific keywords to gain marks; however question practice allows you to see trends in the mark scheme. Another tip is to not be lazy! It's crucial to write points from the mark scheme that you didn't get correct as repetition is key when memorising.

Business Studies

A-Level Advice

BY LUKE YOUENS - HEAD BOY



A-Level Business consists of three ninety minute exams on the following topics

- :Theme 1: Marketing and people- meeting customer needs, the market, marketing mix and strategy, managing people, entrepreneurs and leaders.
- Theme 2: Managing business activities- raising finance, financial planning, managing finance, resource management and external influences.
- Theme 3: Business decisions and strategy - business objectives and strategy, business growth, decision-making techniques, influences on business decisions, assessing competitiveness and managing change.
- Theme 4: Global business- globalisation, global markets and business expansion, global marketing, global industries and companies (multinational corporations).

Marketing is particularly enjoyable because you learn about how businesses brand their products and the different methods they use to attract new customers and retain repeat customers. Globalisation is also interesting because it is fascinating to gain an understanding of how multinational companies operate in global markets.

- 1.Ensure you keep up to date with your notes from the beginning of year 12 - these will become invaluable during exams in year 12 and year 13 when you need to refer to topics you studied earlier in the course.
- 2.If you miss a lesson, speak to your teachers to catch up as the lessons you missed may have contained content which will come up in exams. Equally, make an effort to speak to your teachers if there is a topic you are struggling with. They might be able to offer you extra help or resources to help clarify what is confusing you.
- 3.In addition to doing your homework, outside of lessons look ahead to the topics you may be covering in future. If you can gain a basic understanding of a topic before you start learning it in class, the lessons will provide you with an opportunity to focus on developing higher level skills like analysis and evaluation.
- 4.Keep up to date with the news - you might come across an example which you can incorporate into your answers.
- 5.Over the summer and throughout the two year course,watch TED talks and documentaries about business, enterprise, finance, marketing and globalisation

Chemistry A-Level Advice

BY BHAVYAA OJHA



Chemistry is one of the most challenging and enjoyable subjects you can choose to do. To make sure that you're really cut out for it, ask yourself this: Am I ready to be completely confused? Do I love having a light-bulb moment? And Can I handle the time and determination it takes to go through with the course? If most of your answers are yes then you'll be perfectly fine! Here's an insight into chemistry, it's not necessarily that you'll need to slave away and revise for long hours, if you do it right. It's more about smart revision which you can do if you focus on the questions and fill in the blanks during revision later, in context of exams. In terms of the subject it's as mind-boggling as ever and will require you to pay attention in class and to absorb a lot of information during it so you can do lesser work out of lessons, especially during the practicals which will be a huge step up from the ones you do during GCSE as these are also graded as CPAC, which you'll need to have passed by the end of the A level.

In terms of the A level exams, they consist of 3 papers, 20% of the questions being mathematical ones. The 3 papers are:

- Paper 1: Advanced Inorganic and Physical Chemistry - 90 marks - 1 hour 45 mins (30% of the whole course)
- Paper 2: Advanced Organic and Physical Chemistry - 90 marks - 1 hour 45mins (30% of the whole course)
- Paper 3: General and Practical Principles in Chemistry - 120 marks - 2 hours 30 mins (40% of the whole course).

The most exciting part of this course is by far the practicals, although they require a lot of focus and perseverance, they are most definitely the highlight of the subject as a whole, however we only get to do 16 over the two years. The content that you have done comes into light as you get a deeper understanding after having done them. Additionally it can be a deciding factor as to whether or not you want to pursue a science based course at university! Chemistry mainly consists of roughly 11 - 13 subtopics per year all of which are encompassed into three major sections called Organic Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, and Physical Chemistry, all of which tie into each other one way or the other, even the year 12 topics are built upon during year 13.

Chemistry is not at all an essay based subject, its predominantly a short/long answered subject ranging between 1 to 6 marks. Chemistry doesn't entail many trips other than a few lectures over the two years.

Chemistry A-Level Advice

BY BHAVYAA OJHA



5 TOP TIPS!

1. One of the most important things to do right now is to recap your knowledge on everything you've learnt throughout the GCSE process, especially in chemistry as A levels are a huge step up from them and having a knowledge gap will make A Level's so much harder in the long run as you'll have to recap and learn at the same time. If anything don't forget to go over moles, especially the moles hub.
2. I would also recommend trying to keep a planner of all the days in year 12 and 13 and going over the topics that you would've done throughout the week by first reviewing them, then asking someone to quiz you on them and lastly doing a few exam questions to solidify the understanding of the content. If you create a good revision schedule from the start of year 12, the work won't pile up!
3. Another problem I faced at the beginning of A Level Chemistry was the application style exam questions. A way to overcome application questions is by staying calm and to look for a keyword to link back to any topic that you think it is heading along the lines of. As the questions have only been put in a different context to what you have learnt, hence you'll be able to retrace your knowledge and answer it. The main point to take away from this is to do lots of exam questions and to train your brain in such a way that when you come across these types of questions you don't feel lost, confused or even feel the need to hesitate.
4. Try and stay ahead of the teachers, so do pre-reading of topics, as it is easy to get swept away in a wave of procrastination. Similarly don't wait for teachers to tell you when the end of topic tests are, or when your end of year exams will be, start revising a little bit everyday by doing exam questions and other methods that you may use. This way you won't feel panicked during the exams and so your grades will not suffer. Beware all of these tests are important as they impact your predicted grades and so your ability to get into university.
5. Lastly Chemistry needs patience, so don't get worked up if you don't understand something. You may have had a hard time during GCSE's and just try and remember how you got through it. As, if you've made it this far you will definitely succeed. Just don't put anything on a pedestal in your mind because if you go into the A level thinking it'll be impossible, it'll only make it harder! So try and maintain a positive mindset towards it.

Computing A-Level Advice

BY BEN CLACK AND ANANYA JATTLA



A-level Computer Science is an interesting course that further develops the skills and knowledge gained at GCSE. The subject is theory based but does have a large practical element that is involved in both paper 2 and the coursework.

The course is split into three sections, two papers both worth 40% and a large programming project that makes up the remaining 20%. Paper 1 is about computer systems and contains topics such as the CPU and legal, moral and environmental issues. Paper 2 is about algorithms and programming and involves computational thinking and problem solving. The coursework requires you to analyse a problem, then design and develop a solution.

An enjoyable topic was data types where we gained a deeper understanding into how computers use the binary system to represent data. This included both negative and decimal numbers which had not been covered at GCSE. I liked how this topic interlinked mathematics and logical thinking into the course. Learning about encryption was really interesting because it showcased how creative solutions are constantly being come up with in order to keep personal data safe, a problem relevant to everyone with personal data online. The one-time pad cypher is a key that has to be randomly generated so learning about this brought up interesting discussions about how no set of computer-generated numbers can truly be random and how this can prove as a limitation of solutions produced by computers.

Overall my eyes were opened to the need for creative problem solving and the importance of thinking outside the box in computing. Dijkstra's algorithm is a method used to determine the shortest path between 2 points on a graph/map. I was intrigued by the countless real-life implementations of this algorithm such as minimising costs in both time and money in business, reducing congestion in cities and even data packets finding the quickest path between routers. Our top tips are to make sure that you work on your coursework regularly and learn any additional programming languages early. While it only makes up 20% of your final grade, it requires a lot of time and hard work, so you want to make sure that you do not leave most of it until a few weeks before the deadline, when you are also trying to revise for your other exams. It is also important to do practice questions and past exam papers to test your knowledge. Another tip is to create flashcards and mind maps to help you remember important concepts and ideas. When writing algorithms, you should also discuss different solutions with other people in your class, because they might have ideas that could improve your code and make it more efficient. During the course, it is very important to manage your time effectively. It is very easy to ignore your coursework and only focus on theory, but it is important that you work on it regularly and get feedback from your teachers to improve it.

Drama and Theatre A-Level Advice

BY SAMUEL DAVIS



A-level Drama was extremely fun, you get to go on trips to see different plays, you get to watch other plays online, devising a short play and performing them and then also performing extracts from 3 different plays. However you will have to do essays, it isn't something that you can avoid. The written exam is 40% of your whole grade, it is 3 hours long but with the guidance from the amazing teachers Mrs Moore and Ms Pope you will be fine. The rest of your grade is from the performances I mentioned before. You will study two set plays: Antigone by Sophocles (An Ancient Greek play) and Our Country's Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker (more modern play where Royal Marines and convicts in the 1780s put on a play). You will also have to write about Live Theatre productions that you have seen at the theatre or online. Don't worry if you haven't done GCSE Drama, coming from someone who didn't; you will be fine, just work hard and ask questions if you need to.

My top tips for starting Drama A-level:

1. Read the plays and look up anything you don't understand before you start the year.
2. I would suggest writing up notes that you have learnt in the lesson onto flashcards or mind maps e.g. Terminology for Ancient Greek theatre. Try and keep up with these resources so you won't have to write all of them when it comes to exams; you can just revise from them.
3. If you ever have to practice or perform something by yourselves around the room; go for it, don't do it half-heartedly, you are there to learn and to act, the teachers won't ask you to do something for no reason. Don't be scared if you are loud. In the end it doesn't matter if you do something wrong; it is all about learning.
4. Listen to your teachers, they know what they are talking about and if they suggest something; do it. They are trying to get you the best grade.
5. Lastly, when the teachers give you feedback. React to it. It will help you improve your essays.

Year 12 is different from year 11. You would think it is easier due to the fewer subjects, but that is not the case, so you need to manage your time well. I would suggest that you do the work as soon as it is set and put your free time to good use, for example; for extra research to help you understand the work or React to work even if the teachers haven't asked you to. Going the extra mile will help you in the end. Also times will become stressful. Keeping on top of your work and managing time well does help. But if you are stressed or feel down, talk to people; from friends to teachers. I know Mrs Moore and Ms Pope will always try and give time to talk to you if you need to.

Economics A-Level Advice

BY MIYA TAYLOR



Have you ever wondered why the Great Depression or the Financial Crash of 2008 happened? Or the impact that the Coronavirus will have on the economy? Economics can explain! Economics is a social science and studies the basic economic problem: how to allocate scarce resources in a society with infinite wants. The subject is divided into two branches: Microeconomics and Macroeconomics. Microeconomics focuses on individual producers and consumers whilst Macroeconomics studies overall economies on a regional, national or global scale. Studying Economics will allow you to understand the choices people make and the economics systems across the world.

1. Wider reading is important for securing the top grades, however it can be personalised for your interests. For example, if you're interested in climate change and protecting the environment, you can research about the economics involved such as the impact of negative externalities and the cost of the depletion of resources to future generations. The course is flexible, which is reflected in the exam in which you are to an extent able to choose which essays you answer, and what knowledge you choose to use to support your argument, so there is always an opportunity to use what you have learnt from your wider reading in the exam.
2. One of the most interesting parts of the A-Level is the fact that it will help you understand factors which affect you daily e.g. inflation and employment. In your classes, you will be able to discuss problems that the UK is currently facing including Brexit and the government's budget deficit. To make sure you can fully engage in these discussions, keep abreast of current affairs by reading/ watching the news daily. The Financial Times is free for students (Mr McDonough should be able to provide you with the link) and it is a really useful source of detailed economic analysis.
3. With any A-Level there are going to be some challenging aspects, and Economics is no exception. The main challenge most students face are the 25 markers. This can seem daunting at first, however a lot of practice (which you will definitely be given the opportunity for) can lead to success.
4. There is an element of maths involved in A-Level Economics, which can be a struggle for students if maths is not your strongest subject. None of the maths involved is beyond the level of difficulty of GCSE Maths, but it might be useful to practice calculating the mean and median of a set of data and percentage change over the summer holidays.

One of the main advantages of A- Level Economics is that the questions tend to be straightforward and not too complex. Overall, the challenges the A-Level presents can be overcome with hard work and time so don't worry too much!

English Literature A-Level Advice

BY LAURA WHITE - HEAD GIRL



Studying A-Level English is a totally unique experience: each text you encounter poses a new challenge and offers an insight into a different culture or time period. The discussions which happen in A-Level English classes are some of the most lively in the sixth form because the themes evident in the literature you study are so relevant to today. The comparative and contextual study of American literature which you'll undertake is particularly exciting because it is an opportunity to become an expert in American history, culture and literary movements - by the end of the two years you'll be able to explain what makes American literature distinctly different from its European counterparts.

1. To participate fully in English lessons, you need to have done the prereading and prediscussion tasks set by your teachers to the best of your ability because a lot of the lessons revolve around discussing and developing the ideas the homework introduces. To make the first term of year 12 easier in this regard, read 'Hamlet' and 'The Great Gatsby' (the two books you study at the beginning of year 12) over the summer. This means that when you read them for a second time in the autumn term, you will already be familiar with their plots, so you can focus on analysis rather than understanding.
2. Reading plays can be quite challenging at first because they aren't meant to be read, they're meant to be performed! However, it's something you need to get to grips with because during the A-Level course you'll study at least three plays. When doing prereading for class, it can be helpful to use audiobook versions of the play you're studying (they're available for free on YouTube). In the audiobook versions, the lines for each character are read by different people, which makes it easier to keep track of which character says what line.
3. The style of essay writing expected at A-Level is quite different from GCSE. View this as exciting rather than daunting; you're no longer constrained by the prescribed PEEL/TELEM structure expected at GCSE and instead you are free to develop your own way of writing essays. The most important thing to remember is that you have two years to perfect your essay writing - you don't need to be writing brilliant essays straight away. To get better at writing essays, read as much secondary material about your set texts as possible (like articles and reviews by academics); not only will their ideas enrich your understanding of the set texts, but also by emulating the way they express their thoughts, your own writing will improve.
4. The only way to improve your extended pieces of writing are to respond and react to the feedback that your teachers give you. Whenever you get a piece of feedback, set

English Literature A-Level Advice

BY LAURA WHITE - HEAD GIRL



yourself actionable goals about how you are going to address it eg. if your feedback is to analyse language more fully, your goal might be to go back through your essay, highlight any quotes you've discussed, write each one on a sheet of A4 paper and mindmap the language devices used in each quote and their effects. Then pinpoint one paragraph in your essay where you've done the least language analysis and rewrite that paragraph. This means you're taking steps to improve on your weaker areas as you go, so that by the time exams start, you're much more confident.

5. Hopefully you've all chosen A-Level English because you really enjoy reading. When you're weighed down with reading for class, it's very easy to stop reading for fun, but in doing so you'll find that your enthusiasm for reading will start to fade. Keep reading as widely as possible!

Geography A-Level Advice



BY IZZIE JANSSEN - DEPUTY
HEAD GIRL

A-Level Geography is an extremely diverse subject. It involves studying topics ranging from coastal erosion, to human rights, from volcanoes to globalisation - there is something for everyone! The most popular aspect of the course is by far the fieldwork, where you travel to Devon for one week! This is also in preparation for your coursework, where you must research and answer your very own question. Geography is one of the few remaining subjects that still has coursework. There is no denying that it is a big step up from GCSE, but these top tips should help you to bridge the gap!

- 1) One thing to keep in mind is that Geography is a very much essay-based subject, so conclusions are important! It is not just simply about summarising your answer, but about evaluating it as well! Try to weigh up your points and decide which of them is most significant, and which is the least. This shows the examiner that you are able to come to a final supported judgement.
- 2) As briefly mentioned above, evaluation is so important. Thinking critically and evaluating each point helps you to keep your essay balanced.
- 3) Case studies! Weaving these into your answers makes your argument more persuasive and credible. At A-Level there are a lot of case studies to learn. I would recommend creating flashcards with the name of the case study on one side, and the information on the other. This forces you to condense the knowledge, making it much easier to learn by heart, and even allows you to test yourself!
- 4) In order to ensure you have covered all aspects of the course, remember to use the specification while revising. This can help you to predict what questions may come up and will prevent you from missing out certain topics. You will find that the preparation questions leading up to your exams and past papers incorporate key terms and phrases directly from the specification. Make sure that you are familiarising yourself with these words. RAG each of the sub-sections from the 'detailed content' column of the specification. Use these colours when creating a revision timetable (e.g. focus on red areas).
- 5) Reading around the subject will also help to push your knowledge. There are always 'Geofiles' or recent news articles that link to the content you are studying. You can talk about these in any relevant 12 or 20 markers.

German A-Level Advice

BY NIAMH BROWN



A-Level German is a great course that not only furthers your understanding of the German language but also begins to explore Germany's complex history and diverse culture. Whilst studying A-Level German, you will write literature and film essays, respond to both long- and short-answer questions and develop your ability to communicate in German. As part of the A-Level you must also create and manage your own research project which will be discussed in your speaking exam at the end of Year 13. It is a great opportunity to find out more about an aspect of Germany or other German-speaking countries that you have an interest in! Listed below are a few tips that will hopefully provide some useful advice for studying A-level German:

1. German grammar is well-known for being complex and difficult. I found this aspect of the course probably the most challenging, however, websites like Lingolia and German.net provide really useful exercises to improve and practise your German grammar.
2. Vocabulary is key! It's really important to keep on top of the vocabulary for each topic on the A-Level course. Quizlet is a really quick and easy way to revise and learn new vocabulary. It is also important to frequently revisit vocabulary from old topics to commit it to your long-term memory.
3. When we started studying the book and the film at the beginning of Year 12, I found writing clear and concise essays quite difficult. Using strong essays phrases can help to improve the quality and fluidity of your essays. Planning essays for past exam questions as part of your revision, listing your Point, Evidence and Evaluation in German is also beneficial for practising how to effectively structure your essays.
4. Immersing yourself in German outside of school will really improve your fluency and overall knowledge of German. Listening to German music/podcasts/TV shows/films/news programmes and reading German news articles or short stories will improve your understanding of both spoken and written German. A few good starting points are 'The News in Slow German' (a podcast on Spotify with short news reports) or the 'Learn German' section on the Deutsche Welle website which has lots of articles and clips to read and listen to, covering a variety of interesting themes and topics.
5. Summaries of an audio clip or text are really important in the Listening, Reading and Writing paper at A-Level as they are often worth quite a few marks! Planning is really important when writing summaries; it doesn't have to be detailed but annotating the questions, highlighting the text and listing the points you want to include should make the process much easier.

Government and Politics A-Level Advice

BY EMMA CRAWFORD - YEAR 12

A-Level Politics is lively, relevant and, at times, controversial - it is one of the most engaging A-Levels you could choose to study. It provides an insight into the political beliefs central to an understanding of the modern world and develops analytical, evaluation and debating skills in relation to interesting topics prevalent in today's turbulent political climate.



You will learn about the structures of authority, power and government in the UK. The most exciting part is that through looking at news and current affairs from the UK and America, you will develop the ability to make comparisons between the two political systems. Your awareness of political debate and political issues will also be enhanced by studying four major political ideologies: Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism and Feminism.

1. Keep up to date in terms of UK and US politics. Even if it's just watching the news everyday to keep up with events, it will all help with your understanding and enthusiasm.
2. Take a genuine interest in the topics. Read around the subject, not extensively necessarily, but enough to gain a wider perspective; interest will come with research.
3. Throughout the course, think about how the US and UK systems compare as this will be assessed in the third paper in the exam. Consider parallels, connections, similarities and differences.
4. Watch Prime Minister's Questions or listen to Parliamentary debates or podcasts on what events and scrutiny have happened in Parliament that week. I would recommend the BBC NewsCast for effective, interesting coverage on important events.
5. Make sure you go through the PLC regularly to identify any gaps in your knowledge; if there are any, fill these in as soon as possible. Also, if you tick the green column, make sure you are able to provide at least one example for each topic in that section; you cannot write an essay without them.

History A-Level Advice

BY LAURA WHITE - HEAD GIRL

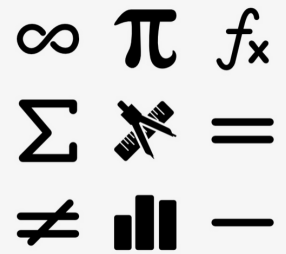


A-Level History is a lot of fun as it gives you the opportunity to explore the past through political, social, economic and cultural perspectives. Through studying Tudor England, you will learn about change, continuity, cause and consequence to understand the personality of each of the monarchs; government; foreign policy and English society, economy and religion between 1485 and 1603. The American Dream unit is an in-depth study of the challenges faced by the USA at home and abroad as it emerged from the Second World War as a Superpower. You will analyse whether the prosperity associated with this time period was shared by all Americans. The final component of the A-Level is an independent research essay on a topic which spans one hundred years. This is one of the most exciting aspects of the course because you have entirely free choice - you can write about any time period and any geographical area - so it is a great opportunity to explore a part of history which interests you.

1. History is one of the A-Levels with the most content to learn. It is important that you're committed to revising as you go because it is difficult to develop the higher level skills of analysis and evaluation until you have the knowledge to support your opinions. Everyone has a different way of remembering information, but I would suggest using the Cornell note system when making your classnotes or doing homework. In the margin, you can write down any information which you come across in the lesson which you'd like to memorise, then after the lesson input this into Quizlet and spend half an hour going through the flashcards. This also means that you will have a full set of flashcards to use during revision.
2. The difference between A-Level and GCSE History essays is that in A-Level History essays need to be driven by argument to achieve good marks - you need to be really opinionated. It is really hard to think of a nuanced opinion off-the-cuff when you are faced with an essay question in the exam. Hence to prepare, regularly take the time to reflect on some of the key historical debates that you have come across. If you are struggling to think of opinions, it can be helpful to research historians' views on a debate then decide which historian you most agree with.
3. When writing essays, balance is really important. Whereas at GCSE you would show balance by writing one paragraph which agrees with the question then one which disagrees, at A-Level you should start to include counter arguments within each paragraph, then explain why your point is more convincing than the counter argument. It takes time and practice to develop this skill but by mastering it you strengthen your line of argument while also ensuring your essays are a balanced consideration of a variety of viewpoints.
- 4.. If you are finding a subsection of one of the units difficult, it can be beneficial to look beyond your class notes and core textbook (the Oxford AQA History textbook) to see if another resource explains the thing you are struggling with in a way which makes more sense to you. For example, you could look at other textbooks beyond the core textbook which cover the whole of the A-Level course - they might include different information or offer a different perspective (the Access to History textbooks on the Early Tudors and the American Dream are good for this). Alternatively, Mr Beale and Mrs Soley have a library of books and articles aimed at A-Level students which explore a specific part of the course in depth, so you could ask to borrow one from them.

Mathematics A-Level Advice

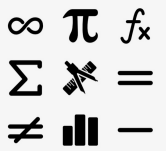
BY VIKRAM TALWARIA



Taking A Level Mathematics can be very useful in the future. Although this is one of the hardest A Levels, it's also the most satisfying one; When you complete a show that question and you get the answer. Plus there is a negligible amount of writing for this subject, which is great if, like me, you don't enjoy writing long answers.

1. **DON'T STRESS!** The first few lessons are hard for everyone. No one is born smart; you have to work hard to get good marks. If you don't get the topic for the first time that doesn't mean you won't ever get it. Complete questions from the textbook, past papers and Physics and Maths Tutor and use the specification to solidify your understanding.
2. **ASK FOR HELP.** Don't suffer in silence if you're struggling on a topic. Teachers are there to help and they are more than happy to go through the classwork, homework or difficult questions that you come across with you.
3. Complete the transition homework teachers set. It may be quite long but you have got a long break! This homework should help you develop skills which will be useful for bridging between year 11 and year 12 Maths.
4. Plan your folder. Think about where you will put all your RAG sheets, tests, print the specification, split the work you do for each teacher. Staying organised from an early stage means you can focus on working rather than organising your folder for a folder check.
5. You have 3 or 4 A Levels to study for so you will be busy. You need to revise all your A Levels equally or prioritise the ones you are underperforming in. But you also need to relax. It is not healthy to only sleep, eat, revise, repeat in year 12. After a day at school I would study from 4pm till 7pm so that I could relax in the evening and not have to think about doing work at night.
6. **Love Maths!** You should be eager to apply your learning into practice questions. You should enjoy the challenge! If you think after a few weeks Maths isn't for you don't worry. Change your A level and do something you love!

Further Mathematics A-Level Advice



BY MARCELLUS HARRIS

The advice I'd give for Further Mathematics is the same as the advice for normal Mathematics, so I thought I would detail what makes the Further Maths course something you should be excited about studying.

Below is a link to the Further maths Edexcel specification. I recommend you have a flick through it to get an idea of what you will be tackling, even if you are not going to touch further maths content immediately -

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Mathematics/2017/specification-and-sample-assesment/a-level-l3-further-mathematics-specification.pdf>

Key Components of the Course

- You will sit 4 papers for the further maths A-Level (as well as your regular maths exams). The papers you will sit are Core Further 1 and 2, Mechanics 1 and Statistics 1.
- As with Regular maths, there are AS and A-Level halves to the course. You will learn some things in AS and build on them in A2, and others in either AS or A2.
- The core content holds the bulk of the A-level, with mechanics being relatively short but tricky, and statistics, though a bit longer, is also considered to be much easier.
- The content will build on what you learn in regular maths, as well as teaching you some very new things. There are crossovers from the GCSE Further maths course, such as matrices, as well as physics and other A-Level courses.

Interesting Parts of the Course

- Complex numbers; using $i = \sqrt{-1}$ and the complex plane, using De Moivre's theorem to prove identities
- Volumes of revolution; finding the volume of shapes formed as you rotate lines around an axis via the summation of cylinders.
- Matrices - Manipulating 2×2 and 3×3 matrices. Using matrices to find the point of intersection of three lines
- First and second order differential equations and their applications, such as using them to describe simple harmonic motion
- Negative binomial distribution; How many trials before we get the r th success?
- Momentum, impulse, and the coefficient of restitution; how do two bodies interact based on their mass and velocity?

Challenging Parts of the Course

- Integration, including improper integrals, inverse trigonometric functions, and hyperbolic functions.
- Vectors; finding the normal to a plane, finding the angle between two planes
- Errors in Hypothesis testing; have we accepted a hypothesis incorrectly?
- Energy equations, oblique collisions; where and when are objects before or after an interaction?

Media Studies A-Level Advice

BY RAMANDEEP BODWAL



A Level Media Studies is an important and unique subject to study since there has been a significant rise in technology as well as online media in the last decade, making it highly applicable within real life and relevant amongst the younger generation. Despite being an essay based subject, A Level Media studies is 30% online coursework, highlighting you will be assessed upon your practical work and written exams. A level Media Studies teaches a variety of media products, making it engaging and interesting. Each component within media is different and includes a new theory as well as new key concept per set text. Each theory/concept provides you with a fresh, intellectual perspective on the media which we come into contact with on a daily basis.

Component 1

- Advertising and Marketing
- Film
- Newspapers
- Music Videos
- Radio
- Video Games

Component 2

- Television in the Global Age
- Magazines - Mainstream and Alternative Media
- Media in the Online Age

Component 3

- Coursework (30% of your grade)

1. There is a lot of key terminology across the whole subject, and in the written exams, marks are awarded for the use of key terms, as well as the application of the theories you have learnt. Therefore each time you come across a new key term in class, you should add the term and its definition to a glossary. You can then turn the glossary into flashcards which can be used for revision.
2. The set texts are not provided within the exam, therefore you need to have learned them thoroughly, as they will need to be referenced in your A Level exam. Once you have been taught a set text in class, watch/read it for a second time, paying close attention to the significance of camera angles, mis en scene and lighting.
3. From the beginning of the course, make sure you keep your folder organised. Divide your folders into Components 1 and 2 and keep all important documents such as key concepts and theory booklets at the front of your folder so you can easily locate them when you need them. n.Keep a divider in your folder for all of your marked end of topic exams and practice exam questions together, as you will need them to prepare for your A Level Exams.

OCR Sport A-Level Advice

BY ABIGAIL SMITH



Key components:

OCR sport is a vocational subject that contains:

- **Coursework** - This is completed throughout both years of the course. Coursework units include:
 - Unit 2 - Sports coaching and activity leadership
 - Unit 5 - Performance analysis in sport and exercise
 - Unit 8 - Organisation of sports events
 - Unit 11 - Exercise for specific groups
 - Unit 13 - Health and fitness testing for sport and exercise
 - Unit 17 - Sports injuries and rehabilitation
 - Unit 19 - Sport psychology

Written exams - There are 3 exams, 2 of these take place in Year 12 and the final exam takes place in year 13. The exams are all sat in January, with opportunities to re-sit if you are unhappy with your result. Exam units include:

- Unit 1 - Body systems and the effects of physical activity
 - Unit 3 - Sports organisation and development
 - Unit 4 - Working safely in sport, exercise, health and leisure
- Practical assessments
- You will be assessed in one team sport and one individual sport as well as OAA.

Interesting aspects of the course:

Lots of practical sessions. Trips such as HOAC and body worlds London.

Challenging aspects of the course:

The course is double-weighted so will take up a lot of your timetable. At times you will have multiple pieces of coursework on the go, it's important to try to complete them even if time is against you.

Top tips:

The coursework you complete in year 12 will count towards your end grade, try to put as much effort into your coursework at the start of the course as possible to avoid having to go back over it and making big changes near moderation days and year 13.

Try your best to stay on top of coursework, there's a lot of it, so having a big backlog of work to complete at the end of the year will be a big challenge.

OCR sport is a great course, try your best to enjoy it :)

Photography A-Level Advice



BY JODIE THOMPSON AND VIVEK PATEL

A-Level Photography is the communication of ideas by visual means. If you have not previously studied photography at GCSE, you will have to learn how to use a DSLR (Digital single-lens reflex camera) and everyone will be encouraged to explore and experiment with a wide range of traditional techniques as well as digital technologies. You will use either google slides or powerpoint to display your work. You will be required to do several shoots and will be given a time constraint for these. In each shoot you must include an overview of the particular photographer who inspired your shoot, an analysis of 4 of their photographs, 10 final images, a contact sheet, a shoot plan, experimentation and a step-by-step of how you edited the final images. You may use a number of photographic platforms to edit images and you need to learn how to use them, the most commonly used are photoshop and lightroom.

What parts of the A-Level are the most interesting?

- In Year 12, you are allowed to do whatever you want. Any photographer, any theme. As you have more freedom, you can mix two or three themes together. Eg, (Long Exposure and Portrait), (Buildings and Nature) etc. When you are researching a photographer, you will learn more to the theme that the photographer is trying to pursue. The photograph you look at and analyse is just the tip of the iceberg. Some of the information from the photographers past will help you and inspire you to experiment with other themes.
- The best part about photography is that if the photo does not fit in with the theme, you can link the photo with another photographer or theme. If you are satisfied about some of your photos, you can share them online to inspire more people.
- Working with your peers is what makes photography fun. In many instances, you will be asked to go to places to take photos. Being there with your peers will allow you to gather ideas and discuss ways to improve your photos. Eg. Angles, lighting, compositions etc.
- Many people will think that Photography is just taking a photo, editing and analysing them. But it's more to just that. It's about understanding the work it takes to produce the photo. It is also the way you perceive the world around you. Photography can reveal your way of seeing things.

A-Level Photography Trips

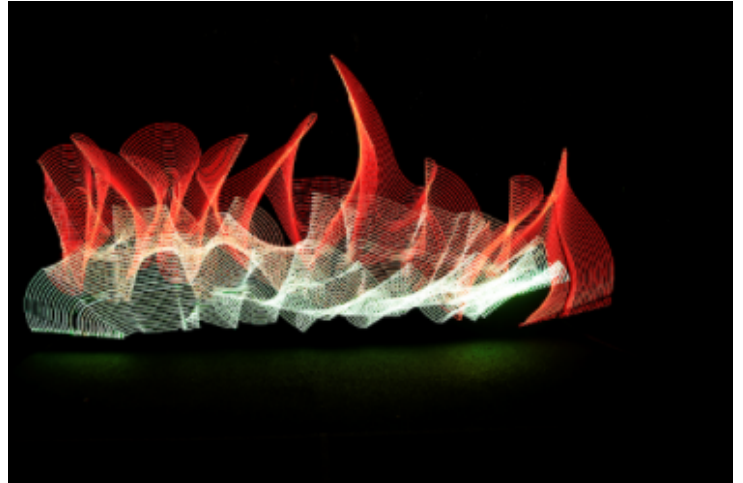
We were lucky enough to have the opportunity to go on a number of trips throughout both year 12 and year 13. In year 12 we went on the minibus every fortnight during our double lesson to visit places in the local area, taking photographs. This included Black Park, Brunel University, Hillingdon Cemetery, a Farm, Windsor and Pitzhanger Manor and gallery. In year 12 we also had day trips to Shoreditch to see the street art and visited both the Royal Academy of Arts and the National Portrait Gallery. In year 12 we also had the opportunity to go to LA - visiting numerous galleries here.

In year 13 we went on an overnight trip to Oxford. Here we visited the Pitt Rivers and Natural History Museum and had the chance to take part in a photoshoot led by a professional. We also had the opportunity to take photographs while exploring the city.

Tips

1. Make sure you keep to your deadline. You should aim to do one shoot per week. If you fall behind, there will be more work piled on top of your projects as well as stress on other subjects
2. Initially finding a specific photographer is difficult. You have to be innovative, think outside the box. Many people will choose shoots that will require the least amount of work. In order to stand out, you need to look at many social media platforms for inspiration. Eg, Pinterest, Instagram, Behance etc. With some photographers, there's no tutorials online, so you'll have to do your best to edit the photos. To overcome this, you can ask your classmate as they might have an idea of how to edit the style you want.
3. In order to improve your skills and understanding of the camera settings, putting your camera on manual will allow you to experiment with the settings to get the best outcome of the surroundings. The most challenging surroundings are when it is dark and gloomy, especially when you have to increase the ISO to brighten the photo without leaving fragments/ noise in the photo. This is why it is a great idea to carry a tripod around so you reduce the shutter speed and keep the ISO as low as possible.
4. Although it might sound simple, getting the right lighting is very difficult. Depending on which direction the sun is, to how bright the day is, affect the outcome of the photo. You do not want a dull photo in your portfolio. What you can do is study the weather before you go to check the cloud cover, direction of the sun etc.
5. If you have time between now and the start of year 12, practise analysing photographs. This is something I found particularly difficult during A level photography but it is a key part of the course as it helps you understand key elements of the photograph and how you can incorporate these elements into your own work.

Examples of A-Level Photography work



Physics A-Level Advice

BY VIKRAM TALWARIA



What's the best thing about Physics? There are no essays to write! For this A Level you learn and understand the content, and apply all of it into 3 exams at the end of your second year. This A Level involves writing (goes up to 6 markers) and lots of Maths; you will apply equations you discover in lessons into scenarios given to you in exams. Luckily you don't need to remember most of the equations because they are given to you in the exam.

Content

- Measurements and their errors: Learn about the base units of measurements and also the measurement errors that can occur during practicals.
- Particles and Radiation: All about the fundamental properties of matter, electromagnetic radiation and quantum phenomena.
- Waves: Explore the characteristics, properties and application of waves while learning more about diffraction, refraction, interference, and superposition.
- Mechanics and materials: Develop your understanding of forces, motion, energy and momentum and discover the bulk properties and tensile strength of materials
- Electricity: Build on your learning from GCSE, where you will use more maths and develop your practical skills. Also study the many electrical applications there are.
- Further mechanics and thermal physics: Consider circular and simple harmonic motion and learn more theories about gases. Fields and their consequences: Explore gravitation, electrostatic and magnetic field theory and their practical applications like in capacitors and satellites
- Nuclear physics: Build on your knowledge of particles and radiation by learning more about the characteristics and properties of stable and unstable nuclei plus the link between energy and mass.

Core practicals

Who doesn't love a good practical! In total there are 12 core practicals to complete. For each practical you complete you are required to do a write up and we use booklets to do so (which is a lot quicker and easier). Teachers then mark the book and also how well you performed the practical. It sounds very daunting at first but they can be really fun! Sure there are always going to be a couple boring practicals, but which other subject is going to let you handle a radioactive source?!

Physics A-Level Advice

BY VIKRAM TALWARIA



Top tips

1. **DON'T STRESS!** The first few lessons are hard for everyone. No one is born smart; you have to work hard to get good marks. If you don't get the topic for the first time that doesn't mean you won't ever get it. Complete practice questions and use the specification to solidify your understanding.
2. **ASK FOR HELP.** Don't suffer in silence if you're struggling on a topic. Teachers are there to help.
3. Complete the transition homework teachers set. It may be quite long but you have got a long break! This homework should help you develop skills which will be useful for the transition period.
4. Plan your folder. Think about where you will put all your RAG sheets, tests, print the specification, split the work you do for each teacher. Staying organised from an early stage means you can focus on working rather than organising your folder for a folder check.
5. Enjoy Physics! Embrace the subject. You should be taking Physics because you enjoy it. If you decide during the first few weeks you're not enjoying it, then think about switching your subject because you should do what you love.

Product Design A-Level Advice



BY BEN HOOLEY - DEPUTY HEAD BOY

A-Level Product Design is a mixture of coursework and exams. Each is worth 50%, therefore they are as important as each other. Throughout the first year you will complete a number of different projects in preparation for the final one. The idea behind doing these are:

- To make sure you get feedback on what to improve on.
- To realise the difference in standards from GCSE.
- To learn new practical skills in the workshop which you can use for the final task.
- To be able to work towards deadlines.

Practice exams are useful because:

- You get to look at the type of wording in a question.
- Practice different styles of questions (longer and shorter).
- Practice the maths style questions if it is a weak point.

1. Find the right balance between completing coursework and revising for exams. Throughout my A-Level, the majority of lessons were focused on coursework. This meant that we had to learn a lot of the theory work independently. A lot of the theory is the same as GCSE, however you go into more detail.
2. Condense your notes and learn the content as you go along. If you are on top of learning the theory, you will be able to focus more on the coursework that will take up a lot of your year 13 lessons and free periods.
3. Use Cornell notes (if you aren't sure how these work, Google it as there are loads of tutorials on YouTube). If any of you have been taught by Mr Babra, you will know how much he talks about them! They are actually quite good for someone who doesn't like to revise for long periods of time. To complete one section of the notes will take 30-45 minutes, which is relatively short. If you are consistent with this then it is the best way to take in all of the content.
4. Make the most of practice papers - I found that you can know the content well but struggle to answer the questions properly. Completing questions and reading the mark scheme can help you to understand what the question really wants out of your knowledge. I know that these can be hard to find as it is a new course. If you have run out of resources, even the GCSE papers will be useful as the information does not change (wood is still wood).
5. Start early - I know that teachers say it all of the time but it is true. Even if it is an hour across a week to begin with, it will all add up leading up to the exam.

Psychology A-Level Advice



BY EMMA-LOUISE JATTAN - DEPUTY HEAD GIRL

Although Psychology is a subject that you will not have studied before it includes aspects of both Maths and Biology. If you are not confident in these subjects, you can still do well in Psychology because you will be taught everything you need to know.

Course content

Year 1

- Social influence - This is a topic on why people conform to society and why they are obedient to figures of authority. There are many interesting studies that you look at in this topic such as Zimbardo's prison study.
- Memory - In this chapter you learn about the different types of memories, why people forget memories and the accuracy of eyewitness testimonies.
- Attachment - This topic is about child psychology and how attachment with a parent from a young age can affect behaviour in later life.
- Approaches in psychology - This is the first topic you do in psychology and it includes the origins of psychological research along with the different ways that psychology is studied for example biologically and through mimicking the behaviour of others.
- Psychopathology - Is a topic that most people love! You learn about phobias, depression and OCD and the ways to explain and treat them.
- Research methods - This is a chapter on methods and techniques that psychologists use to answer questions on human behaviour.

Year 2

- Biopsychology - the application of the principles of biology to the study of physiological, genetic, and developmental mechanisms of behavior in humans and other animals.
- Research methods - This chapter builds upon the first research methods topic, there are maths skills required here for example reading graphs and charts.
- Issues and debates - This topic covers gender and culture in psychology; free will and determinism; the nature-nurture debates; idiographic and nomothetic approaches and ethical issues and social sensitivity.
- Relationships - Here you study what can cause initial attraction in a relationship and also the factors that keep a couple together.
- Schizophrenia - This is a topic where you learn about the biological and psychological explanations and therapies for schizophrenia.

Psychology A-Level Advice

BY EMMA-LOUISE JATTAN - DEPUTY HEAD GIRL



Top tips

1. Always keep notes up to date.
2. Purchase the recommended textbook and always bring this to class!
3. Revise as you go along and for every topic test.
4. Practice essay writing and exam technique from the beginning.
5. Make revision resources (e.g. flashcards) as you go along.

I hope you enjoy the course :) If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me: 13jattane@vynersschool.org.uk

Managing Workload and Stress



A-Levels can be quite stressful and feeling this way is completely normal, especially during the transition from GCSE to A-Level. It is important to stay organised and keep on top of your work from the start so that stress is kept to a minimum. Balancing your time is a good way to do this; it is important to share your time between school work and the activities that you enjoy. I found writing a to-do list every week allowed me to easily keep track of everything that I needed to complete. You can then tick off each task once it's done!

- NIAMH BROWN

The transition from GCSE to A-Level can at times feel overwhelming. Keeping on top of your work from the first day and using your free periods wisely is the key to avoiding feeling stressed. By creating a weekly timetable or rough plan of what work, activities and extra-curriculars I had each week allowed me to plan ahead and create a visual image of what my week would look like. This really helped me to manage my time as I completed tasks in order of priority. Seeing exactly what had to be done at the start of each week also prevented me from procrastinating! Pro tip: always allow for some flexibility in your weekly timetable, in case you have an unexpected topic test or essay to complete as well that week!

The importance of looking after your mental health should not be underestimated! Keeping active - although sometimes tricky to make time for - really helped to clear my head. Even going for a 15 minute run everyday will force you into a good routine and add some structure to your day!

Please also don't forget to enjoy yourselves! Use sixth form to get to know new people and make memories!

- IZZIE JANSSEN

Closer to exams, revision may get stressful. When it came to this, I would write a to do list which had every small topic I wanted to go over before the exam. I would split my time into each topic according to how many days I had. This helped massively with my time management. A levels may seem tricky but it is down to the approach you have towards it which impacts the outcome. If you are constantly getting bad grades, then change your revision technique. There are many study tubers such as UnJadedJade, Ruby Granger and Vee Kativhu who have videos on different revision methods. Never give up and good luck!

- SIMRAN PUNN

Managing Workload and Stress



You are allowed to have fun! While year 12 and year 13 are some of the toughest years of your life academically, you are entitled to have the occasional day where you don't do any schoolwork. It is important to reward yourself for your academic efforts and have events to look forward to. For me, these events were my friends' birthday parties and concerts, but they could be spending time with your family, watching a sports game or going to the cinema. Also, if you know that one evening of your weekend is taken up with a social event, you will likely be more motivated during the week to ensure all your work is done by the weekend so you can enjoy your event.

- LAURA WHITE

A Levels can be a very stressful part of your lives and it's extremely important to remain at peace during these two years. Speaking from personal experience I can vouch for how much of a struggle it was to get through it but here's a few tips to try keep yourself mentally healthy. One being: Exercise, as exercise releases certain hormones that help keep you happy also for those of you who are prone to stress, could redirect your stress into physical activity and this'll help keep you both physically and mentally fit. Another way to keep your cool is by meditating, this helps especially if you have a very restless mind, try a few breathing techniques and use apps like Calm, they can even help you sleep on tiresome nights. Lastly prepare, the best way to keep stress in check is by not letting things pile up as they then seem more intimidating and you may feel like you don't know where to start. Just try and keep a timetable and stay ahead of your work, most importantly have lots of downtime, put those down in your timetable so you don't end up overexerting your brain! Everyone needs a break! Finally I wish you all the best of luck year 11's!

- BHAVYAA OJHA

DISCLAIMER

You may notice that a few subjects that Vyners offer which are missing from this booklet (BTEC ICT, A-Level Music and A-Level PE). This isn't because we think they are any less important! Unfortunately no year 13 who studies BTEC ICT volunteered to contribute their advice to this booklet. The Music department have changed the specification they teach and we didn't feel comfortable giving you advice on a specification we haven't studied. Similarly, A-Level PE didn't run for our year, so we are unable to offer you advice on that subject. If you are planning to study any of the subjects which are missing and want advice or suggestions for how to prepare, please get in touch with the subject leaders.