

Robert
May's
School

KS4 Options Part 1:
Qualifications and Career Pathways
2021 – 2023

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January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Year 9 Options: your child's GCSE examination choices

This is an extremely exciting part of your child's educational journey. In the weeks ahead your child will be asked to decide on the examination subjects that they would like to take from September 2021.

We are pleased to share this document with you. It has been produced to help you and your child discuss together the broad range of subjects on offer here at Robert May's School. A number of national changes have been made to GCSE since 2016. It may be useful for you to be aware of several points:

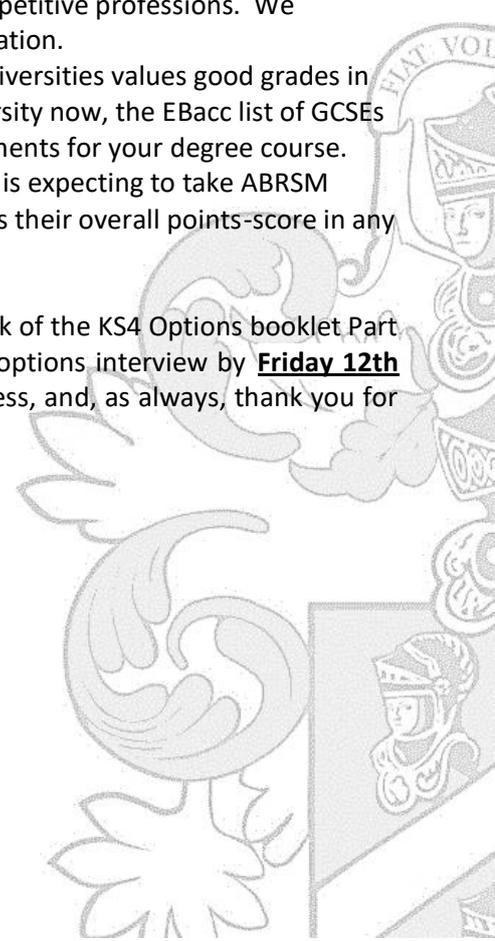
- ❑ **Numbers for grades:** All GCSE subjects will be assessed using a number system in place of the old letter grades. For example, what used to be a G grade is now a grade 1. An old A* grade is now a grade 8 or 9. A "standard pass" grade (old C) is now a grade 4. The more desirable "strong pass" is a Grade 5.
- ❑ **Curriculum offering:** We are committed to a curriculum tailored to students' individual needs, potential and ambitions. In May 2017 Ofsted reported: *The curriculum is broad, challenging and interesting. You [RMS] ensure that the well-planned curriculum provides pupils with a firm foundation for the next stage of their education.*
- ❑ **The English Baccalaureate (EBacc):** The full EBacc is made up from six subject areas. Compulsory for all students are: English Literature, English Language, Maths, Science (as a single, double or triple award, and can include Computer Science). Then students can choose at least one humanities subject, either History or Geography, and at least one language which can be selected from French, German or Spanish. There is no 'EBacc certificate' as such. It is a name for this group of GCSEs.
- ❑ **Languages GCSE?** As the country pulls away from previous arrangements with European markets, it seems increasingly likely that future employers will require job applicants to have familiarity with at least one European language. Learning another language to a good standard is excellent "brain training" too. In a rapidly changing world, in which most large businesses have international links, it makes sense to consider taking a European language, especially if applying to top universities or competitive professions. We strongly recommend that all students give this opportunity careful consideration.
- ❑ **The Russell Group of Universities:** We are told that the Russell Group of Universities values good grades in the EBacc list of GCSE qualifications. If you are starting to think about university now, the EBacc list of GCSEs enables you to make strong choices at A Level, to suit the entrance requirements for your degree course.
- ❑ If your child plays a musical instrument and/or sings to a high standard, and is expecting to take ABRSM Grade 6 or above before June 2022, this qualification will also count towards their overall points-score in any subsequent university application.

We are asking you and your child to complete the **Curriculum Statement** at the back of the KS4 Options booklet Part 2 and return it to the member of the Senior Leadership team at the end of your options interview by **Friday 12th February 2021**. Thank you for participating in this important decision-making process, and, as always, thank you for your continuing support.

Yours faithfully,



Joanna West
Headteacher



THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUALIFICATIONS

There is far more to education than just exam success. Nevertheless, we recognise the importance of gaining qualifications both as a stepping stone to future education and employment and as a motivational factor. Most of our students will have gained at between 8 and 10 GCSEs (or equivalents) by the time they complete their studies at RMS. We provide access to qualifications in a wide range of subjects at levels 1 and 2. This wide range enables us to help students to find the combination of courses that best suits their individual needs and begins to shape their future in education and employment.

GCSEs – See additional guidance under Core Subjects

All GCSE qualifications are graded with numbers from 9-1 with a grade 9 being awarded for outstanding achievement. Grades 1-3 are known as Level 1 passes. Grades 4-9 are known as Level 2 passes. Grade 5 is regarded as being the equivalent of what used to be a Grade C “good pass”. Most Universities state that a Grade 8 is equivalent to A*, with Grade 9 reserved for exceptional performance.

In some GCSE subjects, exams are tiered. The foundation tier is aimed at students likely to gain Grades 1-5. The higher tier is aimed at students likely to gain Grades 4-9.

ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE

What is the English Baccalaureate (“EBacc”)?

1. The Government believes that schools should offer pupils a broad range of academic subjects to age 16, and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) promotes that aspiration. The government target is that nationally 75% of students study the full EBacc by 2022 and 90% by 2025.
2. The EBacc recognises students’ achievements across a core of selected academic subjects in getting good passes in rigorous GCSEs. The EBacc covers achievement in English, Mathematics, Sciences and/or Computer Science, at least one Language, and one humanities subject out of History and Geography.

Most students at Robert May’s School follow some or all of these subjects as part of their curriculum. We strongly recommend that any student considering going to university should ensure that they choose a minimum of 5 EBacc subjects. Four out of the 5 are covered by English, Maths and Combined or Triple Science.

The following guidance is taken from a Russell Group publication available at: www.russellgroup.ac.uk (Informed Choices.)

Q: Do I need to have passed the English Baccalaureate to get into a Russell Group university?

A: The English Baccalaureate includes academic subjects highly valued by the Russell Group but it is not required for entry to any Russell Group university. With the exception of English and Maths, and in a rare case, a Modern Foreign Language, most universities have no universal entry requirements in terms of specific GCSE subjects. Subject choice is ultimately much more important at the post-16 or A-level stage.

However, entrance requirements do vary between universities and courses (for example Medicine courses sometimes require certain subjects and grades at GCSE). Therefore, we strongly encourage students to check universities’ websites for further information published by individual institutions.



Q: Is it true that a modern foreign language at GCSE or equivalent is required for entry to Russell Group universities?

A: Universities value language skills but there is no universal entry requirement that students must have studied a modern foreign language at GCSE or equivalent. However, there may be course-specific requirements, so we strongly encourage students to check universities' websites for details of these.

Currently University College London (UCL) is the only Russell Group institution to require a modern language GCSE at grade 5 or above for all of its programmes. However, if you did not take a modern foreign language GCSE, or if you got a grade 4 or below you can still apply to any UCL degree programme, and it won't negatively affect your application. You will not be rejected just because you don't have it but you will need to complete a short course in a modern foreign language, either on a summer school or in the first year of your degree, to catch up.

There is no formal EBacc certificate. Recognition of the proportion of students in Year 11 who score well in the EBacc is recorded in national school performance tables.



THE UPPER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Typically, students at RMS will take between 8 and 10 GCSE or equivalent subjects. At RMS our focus is on quality rather than quantity of subjects covered. Our aim is to support students in achieving the highest possible grades in each subject.

Core Subjects

GCSEs in English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, double or triple Science (choice of courses). Citizenship, Personal, Social, Health and Enterprise Education are taught through the weekly tutor programme. In addition, students receive 2 lessons of PE per week. "Core" PE is not examined.

Optional GCSE Subjects

GCSE courses are traditional academic courses that lead to further study at any post-16 establishment. Examinations are taken at the end of year 11 and a small number have a proportion of teacher-assessed work (controlled assessment) that is carried out in school during year 10 or year 11.

Students are able to choose optional GCSE subjects in Modern Foreign Languages, Humanities, Physical Education, Creative Arts, Performing Arts, Science, Technology, and Computing. Upper school courses at RMS are either GCSEs, BTECs or 'Nationals'.

Optional National and Technical Awards

Cambridge Nationals are the successor to OCR Nationals, available in a range of engaging subjects that are equivalent in content to GCSEs. They are aimed at students who prefer a more 'hands-on' learning style with a smaller proportion of examined content and can lead on to further study in a specific field. RMS offers nationals in Child Development and ICT awarded at level 1 or 2. This means a GCSE equivalent of a pass (grades 1-4) or a good pass (grade 5-9). The courses provide an excellent start for vocational study and enable progression to Level 3 vocational qualifications, such as Cambridge Technicals, A Levels or Apprenticeships.

Technical A-Level equivalents or T-Levels at post-16 were launched in September 2020 in three areas. The first three available T levels are Education and Childcare, Construction and Digital. A further seven will be available from September 2021 eventually building to 25 subjects in total.

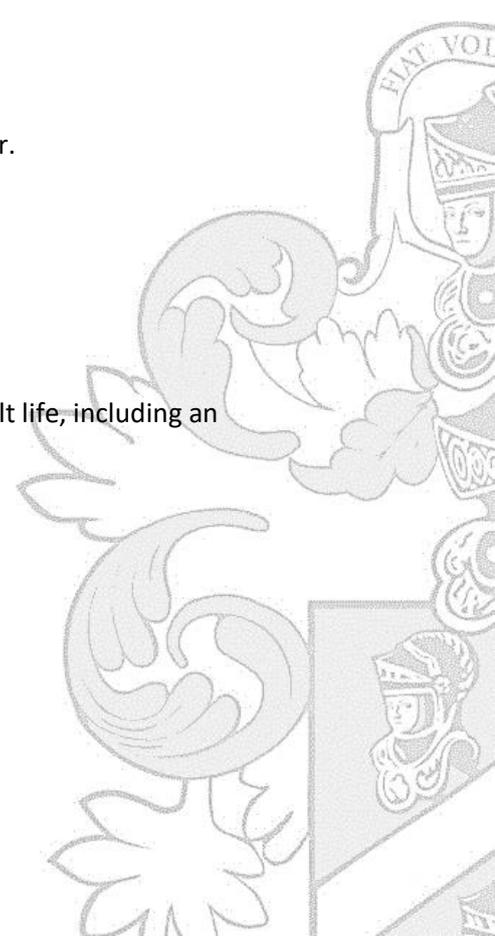
Optional Courses that are not examined

Vocational Support through discussion with Vocational co-ordinator or LMT member.

Overall

Each student's combination of subjects should:

- ◆ be broad, balanced, challenging and interesting
- ◆ prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life, including an understanding of British Values
- ◆ promote their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development
- ◆ provide breadth of opportunity
- ◆ provide a curriculum that is personalised to meet their individual needs.



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHILD'S HEAD OF YEAR

January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you know, we aim to create an environment in which all students at RMS are able to better their own lives and those of others around them. This is a very exciting time for Year 9 students, and indeed for you. Our process for selecting Options is designed to ensure that all students receive the necessary help and guidance needed to make suitable subject choices. Our guiding principle is that we want students to have a broad and balanced, knowledge-rich curriculum in the upper school that provides them with ample opportunities for their future development. To achieve this balance students have to supplement the compulsory GCSE subjects, Mathematics, English and Science with other subjects. Choosing from RMS's broad range of subjects will result in a wider range of future opportunities and should be a rewarding process. The procedure is designed with students at its heart. With that in mind, students and parents should be aware of the following dates on which to gain additional information:

- Options Information for Parents (Remote) – Thursday 14th January 2021**
- Parents' and Carers' Consultation (Remote) – Week commencing Monday 18th January 2021**
- Option Interviews / Final Choices – Friday 12th February 2021**

When selecting Options it is also wise to bear in mind the following four things:

- i. A student's ability to study – does the subject have a high written component, or is there a level of practical and creative ability that is essential to succeed?
- ii. A student's interest in a subject – do they enjoy the subject?
- iii. How the course will be examined – what proportion is assessed in class or by practical work/ performances? What proportion is by terminal exams and how long are these exams?
- iv. What skills are students learning? Do the skills fit with career aspirations?
- v. By working in partnership with you as parents/carers and with your child, our aim is to ensure that all students have a rich programme of study for Years 10/11 that develops skills, knowledge, understanding and opens doors for the future in our ever-changing 21st century world.

Yours faithfully,

Mr T Parsons
Head of Year



CHOOSING SUBJECTS

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1 Students should choose subjects that they enjoy and in which they feel confident they can be successful. They should not choose subjects solely because they like the teacher, or because their friends are taking them.
- 2 Students should never assume that they know which subjects are required for a career. They should check by using the library and university/career websites to find the most up to date information and ask their Year Head, Tutor and Head of Careers for help.
- 3 Students should talk about the subjects they want to study with the people who can help, such as the Careers adviser (in school every Monday and who will also be available at the Parents' Evening on 30th January).
- 4 Students should not think that because of their gender (or chosen gender assignment) they shouldn't do certain subjects.
- 5 Students should talk through their ideas and concerns with their parents/carers.
- 6 Students have completed a Careers Guidance Programme using a software programme called KUDOS. Students should keep their login details as they can refer to the careers information on the website throughout the upper school.

RECOMMENDED USEFUL INFORMATION:

- ❑ The Careers Library (which is in the main school library) has a great deal of information to help. Students can use this after school and at break times.
- ❑ **Careers 2021** is an annual jobs directory which is a reference guide for hundreds of career options.
- ❑ **Various books** about "What to Study", and books about specific careers including 'Choosing your GCSEs'.
- ❑ University Undergraduate course webpages.
- ❑ The Robert Mays Careers website has links for useful organisations to assist with career choices
- ❑ **Websites like icould** to investigate possible careers <http://icould.com/>
- ❑ **There is a National Careers Website:** <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>
- ❑ UCAS website. (University entrance)

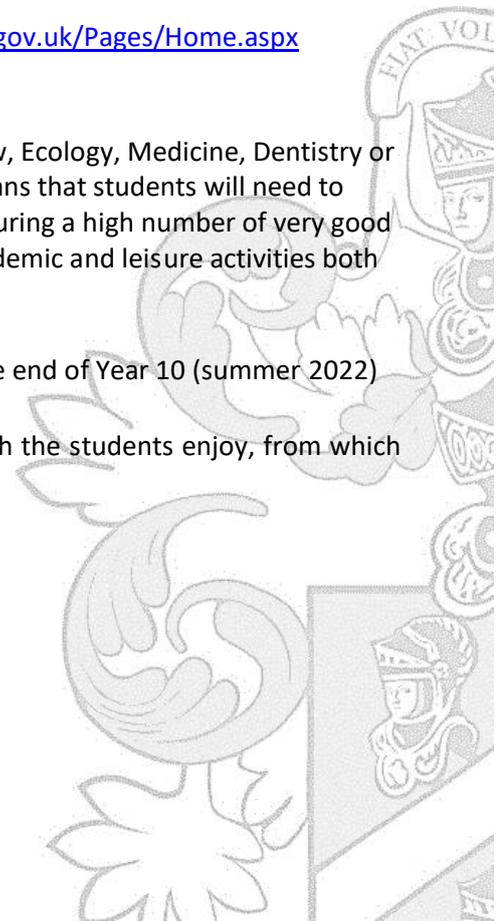
Relevant work experience is particularly helpful if you are looking for a career in Law, Ecology, Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science. The competitive nature of these sought-after courses often means that students will need to demonstrate a wider contribution to the school, community or a club as well as securing a high number of very good GCSE passes. We recommend that all students aim to strike a balance between academic and leisure activities both for their health and well-being.

Students will be given the opportunity to set up a work experience placement at the end of Year 10 (summer 2022)

We believe that it is sensible to follow a broad-based programme of subjects which the students enjoy, from which they can gain the facts, ideas and skills to help them for the rest of their lives.

We want students to:

- ◆ Learn to help themselves
- ◆ Learn to help others
- ◆ Learn to make the world a better place



CAREER “ROUTES”

There are different "routes" that can be taken by students when they leave compulsory education which now means that all students MUST carry on in education and training until they are 18 years old. Each requires certain qualifications:

1. FULL TIME STUDY AT A SIXTH FORM COLLEGE OR COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Over 97% of RMS students go to a college to continue their education. Local colleges offer courses at Level 1, 2 and 3 in both academic and vocational subjects. Robert May's has excellent links with Alton College, Farnborough Sixth Form College, Queen Mary College, Peter Symonds College, FCoT, BCoT and Sparsholt. Guidance for choices at Post 16 is an important part of our upper school curriculum. Many subjects currently demand Grades 9-5 (A* – C) grades at GCSEs. Students aiming at university places need to be aware that they will need the highest possible grades (7-9). Sixth Form Colleges like Farnborough and Peter Symonds also support students with Oxbridge entrance preparation. Some courses can be accessed with lower grades, good attendance, consistent effort, a positive attitude and a strong school reference.

All students need to be aware that if they complete Year 11 without gaining a minimum grade 4 in maths and one English GCSE, they will need to continue these two core subjects throughout their college experience. This will take time away from other subjects they might like to study.

2. APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship is a job with training that allows students to learn, earn and achieve nationally recognised qualifications ranging from Level 2 - intermediate apprenticeships through to Level 7 which are degree level apprenticeships. They can take between one to four years to complete. Apprenticeships are becoming more prominent in our educational environment. The new government apprenticeship levy is aimed at promoting and funding increasing numbers of apprenticeships. They are also no longer limited to more vocational careers and now cover many different job roles, including law, engineering and accountancy.

<https://www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice/apprenticeships/types-of-apprenticeship>

Students can leave school and go directly into an apprenticeship but these placements are sometimes hard to find. If students wish to follow this route, we also advise a full time application to a college as a backup.

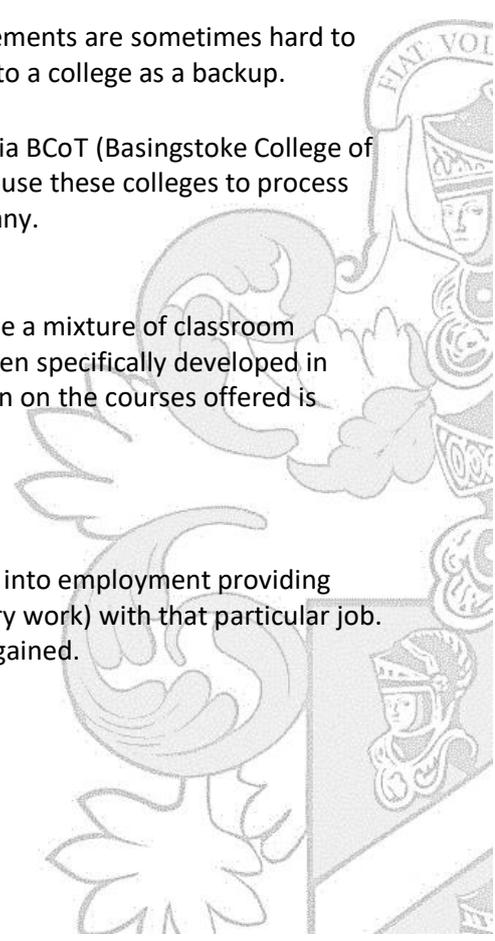
Further information can be found on the National Apprenticeship website and via BCoT (Basingstoke College of Technology) and FCoT (Farnborough College of Technology) as many employers use these colleges to process their applications for apprenticeships rather than applying directly to the company.

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

T Levels are being introduced starting this year. These 2-year courses will provide a mixture of classroom learning and on the job experience. They are equivalent to A Levels and have been specifically developed in collaboration with businesses to meet the needs of industry. Further information on the courses offered is available from the sixth form colleges.

3. STRAIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT

At present the Government has said that it will be acceptable for students to go into employment providing there is a minimum of 20 hours of training per week (which can include voluntary work) with that particular job. Employers usually require school references and evidence of any qualifications gained.



PERSONAL STATEMENT AND KEEPING RECORDS

All of our students have talents. Success in examinations is very important, but there are many other aspects of students' lives which deserve recognition. During Year 11 each Robert May's student will complete a personal statement. This document will detail all the activities (both within and outside school) in which they have gained success. This statement will be sent with application forms for jobs or Further Education courses. Students in Year 9 have an electronic folder to keep their careers work in. This will include a personal record to show their exploration of the world of work and their planning and monitoring of their future. They will continue to keep these records throughout Years 10 and 11. Students are strongly encouraged to produce their own record of achievement which can be used in interviews to highlight the range of talents and experiences that a student can offer to a potential employer or college.



Appendix: THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Qualifications are a vital element in the passport to our working world. However certain or uncertain young people are about what they want to do in the future, qualifications will help them achieve their goals and keep doors open along the way.

Qualifications in the National Framework are arranged in eight levels. The higher the level, the greater the depth of knowledge, skills and understanding that has to be demonstrated for the qualifications to be gained. Courses leading to different qualifications will vary in content, learning styles and methods of assessment.

Level	Qualification examples
Entry (levels 1-3)	<p><u>Entry Level Award, Certificate, Diploma</u> English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Skills for Life Functional Skills (English, Maths, ICT) Essential Skills</p>
1 RMS working with these qualifications	<p><u>GCSEs grades 1-3</u> <u>Award, Certificate, Diploma (City & Guilds, CACHE, OCR, BTEC/Edexcel/Pearson¹)</u> English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) NVQ Level 1 First Certificate Functional Skills Essential Skills Music (ABRSM grades 1-3)</p>
2 RMS working with these qualifications	<p>GCSEs grades 4-9 <u>Award, Certificate, Diploma (City & Guilds, CACHE, OCR, BTEC/Edexcel/Pearson¹)</u> English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) NVQ Level 2 National Certificate/Diploma Intermediate Apprenticeship² Functional Skills Essential Skills Music (ABRSM grades 4-5)</p>
3	<p>A Levels (grades A-E) T Levels (from September 2020) AS Levels Award, Certificate, Diploma (City & Guilds, CACHE, OCR, BTEC/Edexcel/Pearson¹) English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Access to Higher Education Diploma Foundation Diploma (Art and Design) NVQ Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship² National Certificate/Diploma International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Music (grades 6-8)</p>

Level	Qualification examples
4	Higher National Certificate (HNC) Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) Higher Apprenticeship ²
5	Higher National Diploma (HND) Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) Foundation Degree NVQ Level 4 Higher Apprenticeships
6	Degree with Honours (e.g. BA Hons, BSc Hons) Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma Ordinary Degree (without Honours) Higher Apprenticeships
7	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma Master's Degree (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA, MPhil) Integrated Master's Degree (e.g. MEng) Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) NVQ Level 5
8	Doctorate (e.g. PhD, DPhil, EdD, DClInPsy) Government proposing to develop Apprenticeships to higher levels.

