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CHOOSING YOUR GCSE OPTIONS FOR YEARS 10 & 11

Year 9 is an exciting stage in your education as this is when you choose some of the subjects you will study for GCSE from the full range you studied in Years 7 and 8.

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CHOOSING YOUR OPTIONS FOR YEARS 10 AND 11

This document is designed to help you by:

- Detailing the full range of subjects, both compulsory and optional.
- Explaining how the curriculum for Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) is structured at Notre Dame.
- Offering some advice on choosing the options that are right for you.

Further advice is available at any time from the Year 9 Form Tutors:
Ms Willis, Head of Year 9 (iwillis@notredame.co.uk)
Mrs Bantin, Assistant Head – Curriculum (rbantin@notredame.co.uk)

The Careers Library contains comprehensive guides to a wide range of careers. In addition, all girls have access to the ‘Kudos’ programme through the School network for ideas and assistance. The PSHE programme in Year 9 allows for all aspects of subject choice to be explored.

A Careers Adviser from the Independent Schools Careers Organisation will be available for advice at Parents’ Evening prior to making final subject choices and will come into School to deliver careers sessions in PSHE lessons.

There are three strands to the programme followed by students in Year 10 and Year 11. These strands are designed to ensure that students follow a broad, balanced curriculum but also have time to explore some of the wider opportunities on offer at Notre Dame School.

All students follow the same core curriculum but choose three option subjects and one enrichment activity.

Core (ALL)

Maths
English Language
English Literature
Theology
Science (combined or separate)

Non examinable

PSHE
Games

Options (choose three)

Art & Design
Art & Design: Textile Design
Computer Science
Drama
Food Preparation & Nutrition
Geography
History
Latin
Music
Physical Education
Spanish

Enrichment (choose one)

Study Period
Further Maths
HPQ

Choosing the option subjects

We advise students to choose subjects from different categories:

1. One language (unless they have learning support and have decided not to continue a language to GCSE – this should be discussed with the Senco).
2. Either history or geography
3. One practical subject

Students who do not choose a language should choose another subject of their preference from the list.

Students wishing to choose outside of this should speak to Ms Willis or Mrs Bantin.

CORE SUBJECTS

The curriculum consists of a common core of subjects studied by all pupils at GCSE:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ENGLISH LITERATURE

MATHEMATICS

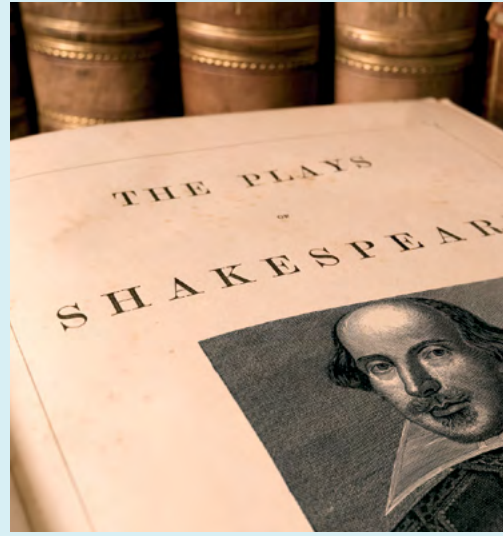
SCIENCES

THEOLOGY

PSHE (non examinable)

GAMES (non examinable)





ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

Examination Board: AQA

English Language and Literature are taught simultaneously, although they result in two separate GCSEs.

English Language is the study of short unseen fiction and non-fiction texts and aspects of writing for different purposes and audiences. The reading and writing sections are equally assessed.

Paper 1 (studied in Year 10) consists of a piece of unseen fiction and students have to analyse the writers' use of language and structure and to respond in an evaluative way to a statement. They will also be asked to write a narrative or descriptive piece.

Paper 2 (studied in Year 11) consists of one piece of 19th century non-fiction and one modern text. Students will be asked to summarise, compare and analyse these texts. They

will also be asked to write a persuasive or informative piece. Again, the reading and writing sections are equally weighted.

Spoken Language is another component of English Language and students receive a separate certificate for this. The marks awarded are Pass, Merit or Distinction.

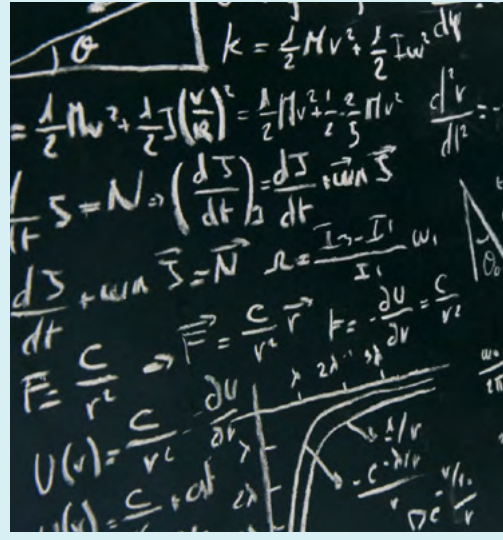
The English Literature GCSE focuses on exploring a range of texts from the English Literary Heritage.

For Paper 2 (studied in Year 10), students will study a 20th century text (normally JB Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*) and an anthology of poetry. They will also be given unseen poetry on which to comment.

For Paper 1 (studied in Y11), students will read a Shakespeare play (normally *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet*) and a 19th century novel (such as *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol* or *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*).

They will be assessed on being able to interpret and analyse texts and understand the placement of the text within its context; there will also be a comparative element. All of these skills build upon those studied in Years 7-9.

The skills taught in English should be viewed as transferable and literacy skills are vital for all other subjects. The best ways for students to prepare at home and to achieve their potential are to read widely, choosing both fiction and non-fiction texts (to include newspapers and magazines) and to discuss these. Doing practice papers will also be a beneficial way to foster and polish the skills needed to do well and a range of practice papers will be made available to students.



MATHEMATICS

Examination Board: Edexcel

All pupils will be entered for Edexcel (IMA1) GCSE mathematics, the majority at the Higher Tier. The Foundation Tier will be used for those pupils who may not achieve a Grade 5 by taking the Higher Tier examination.

The GCSE mathematics content is divided into six main topic areas:

- 1) Number
- 2) Algebra
- 3) Ratio, Proportion and Rates of Change
- 4) Geometry and Measures
- 5) Probability
- 6) Statistics

The new (post-2017) GCSE is more rigorous and robust, giving students access to high-quality qualifications. There is a greater emphasis on algebra at Higher Tier, allowing for smoother progression to A Level mathematics and related subjects. A greater emphasis on ratio, proportion and rates of change at both tiers will ensure that students with a pass at GCSE have the numerical skills required to progress to a wide range of other A Level subjects.

In mathematics lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop:

- a positive attitude to mathematics, including confidence, enjoyment, curiosity and perseverance
- an appreciation of the place of mathematics in society, including historical and cultural influences, art and nature
- an ability to think mathematically – precisely, logically and creatively
- a willingness and ability to work independently and co-operatively

- the skill to investigate mathematical ideas, and to test and prove their own hypotheses
- a firm foundation for appropriate further study

Assessment is via three examination papers, each 1½ hours long. Students have access to a calculator for two of the papers.

Students are assessed in three strands:

- **Assessment Objective 1** is about using and applying standard techniques
- **Assessment Objective 2** is about reasoning, interpreting and communicating mathematically
- **Assessment Objective 3** is about solving problems with a focus on solving non-routine problems in mathematical and non-mathematical contexts



THEOLOGY

Examination Board: AQA A

In Years 10 and 11, students study for the AQA A GCSE Religious Studies examination, which they take at the end of Year 11.

The course comprises TWO examinations:

Paper 1:

A Study of Catholic Christianity and Islam (worth 50%)
Specification outline: this unit requires students to study the beliefs, teachings and practices of two world religions. We look at the divergent views of Roman Catholic Christianity along with Protestant and Orthodox views. The other half of this exam is the beliefs, teachings and practices of Islam.

Paper 2:

Thematic Study of Ethics and Philosophy (worth 50%)

Specification outline: in this unit, there are four themes which explore contemporary issues in ethics and philosophy.

The topics include:

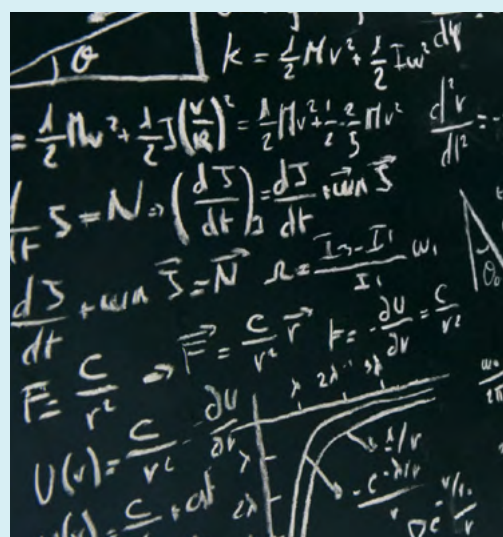
- 1) **Relationships and Marriage**
- 2) **Peace and Conflict**
- 3) **Life and Death**
- 4) **Existence of God**

This part of the course includes religious, non-religious and secular viewpoints.

Skills Gained in Theology

Students will:

- be encouraged to gain understanding and knowledge of different world religions
- increase their levels of analysis and evaluation
- develop independent and co-operative skills
- increase their soft skill set, including emotional intelligence and tolerance



SCIENCES

Examination Board: AQA

At Notre Dame, we offer girls the opportunity to study for either two or three GCSEs in science, depending on their aptitude and interest in the subject.

It is worth noting that whichever course is followed, pupils will study all three sciences, examined in separate units in biology, chemistry and physics which collectively make up their science GCSEs.

All girls will start studying GCSE science in Year 9. For two GCSEs in science (known as Combined Science Trilogy), pupils will study two units in each science and gain two overall grades. Each girl will sit six examinations at the end of Year 11; each paper will last one hour 15 minutes. There is both a Higher Tier (Grades 9-4) and a Foundation Tier (Grades 5-1) option available.

For three GCSEs in science, there will also be two examinations per subject; however, each will last one hour 45 minutes. Pupils will gain three overall grades, one in each of biology, chemistry and physics.

All GCSE science qualifications are linear. This means that pupils will sit all their examinations at the end of the course in Year 11 and there will be no controlled assessments or coursework.

Biology		Chemistry		Physics	
Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 1	Paper 2
Cell Biology	Homeostasis and Response	Atomic Structure and the Periodic Table	Rates and Dynamic Equilibrium	Energy	Forces
Organisation	Inheritance	Bonding and Structure	Crude Oil	Electricity	Waves
Infection and Response	Variation and Evolution	Quantitative Chemistry	Chemical Analysis	Particle Model of Matter	Magnetism and Electromagnetism
Bioenergetics	Ecology	Chemical Changes	Chemistry of the Atmosphere	Atomic Structure / Radioactivity	Space (Physics GCSE only)
		Energy Changes	Using Resources		



“Study periods can be a massive lifesaver. Because although you’ve got time at home to manage everything, and do your homework, having the time in School is really helpful.”

Year 11 student

“When choosing your options, take your time, there’s no rush, and there’s no pressure. If you have a rough idea of what you want to do, that’s really helpful. But if you don’t, then you’ve got the support to make a decision.”

Year 11 student



“Advice for the rest of Year 9? I’m in Year 11 now and I’m thinking, oh, I don’t remember anything that I did in Year 9. I wish I could go back, as I’d have listened and paid a lot more attention than I did!”

Year 11 student

“I would definitely do one practical subject. It breaks things up so that you’re not doing theory every single lesson. Because you’re actually doing something instead of just sitting at a desk six periods a day, you’re more active.”

Year 11 student





OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

On top of the compulsory core subjects studied by all pupils at GCSE, we offer a range of subjects covering arts, humanities, practical and physical.

ART & DESIGN

ART & DESIGN: TEXTILE DESIGN

COMPUTER SCIENCE

DRAMA

FOOD PREPARATION & NUTRITION

GEOGRAPHY

HISTORY

LATIN

MUSIC

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

FRENCH

SPANISH





ART & DESIGN

Examination Board: Edexcel

The GCSE in Art & Design comprises two components:

Component 1

Personal Portfolio
(Coursework) (60%)

Component 2

Externally Set Assignment
(Exam) (40%)

Component 1

Personal Portfolio (Coursework)

The Personal Portfolio consists of two projects that are set by the School. In the first year, students will be led through a number of workshops developing their 2D and 3D art making skills. This includes painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, ceramics, textiles and digital editing using Photoshop.

Students will learn about key artists and art movements and make contextual links to their own artistic development. Students will develop work within their sketchbooks as well as completing photoshoots and large-scale work.

Students will be assessed on the development of their ideas, links to appropriate resources, experimenting and refining, mastery of materials, recording their intentions and personal and meaningful responses.

The personal portfolio (60%) will be completed by the start of the spring term of Year 11.

Component 2

Externally Set Assignment (Exam)

At the beginning of the spring term of Year 11, the exam board will release the externally set assignment and students will begin their response to the exam question. Students will use the knowledge and skills they have developed during the personal portfolio to complete the work. Students will complete work for the exam in lessons and independently at home; this is called their preparatory studies. In late April or early May, students will complete the exam by completing a 10-hour supervised exam over a two-day period. Students will use this time to complete a final outcome linked to their preparatory studies.

All work must be submitted for the externally set assignment (40%) on the final day of the exam.

Trips: both day and residential trips are part of the course.



ART & DESIGN: TEXTILE DESIGN

Examination Board: AQA

Textile Design is an exploration of textile techniques such as weaving, fabric printing and dying, surface textiles, fabric manipulation and garment construction.

The Textile Design course comprises two components:

Component 1

Personal Portfolio:
(Coursework) (60%)

Component 2

Externally Set Assignment
(Exam) (40%)

Component 1

Personal Portfolio (Coursework)

The Personal Portfolio consists of two internally set projects. Students will be taught a wide range of textile techniques during the first year, gaining an understanding of the process and appropriate artist responses. Students will learn a variety of textile methods, such as fabric printing (digital and dyed), weaving, embroidery, fabric manipulation, surface textile skills, textile installation and garment construction. For each project, students will develop and apply the knowledge, understanding and skills they have gained to create a project which realises personal intentions relevant to textile design and their selected area(s) of study. The knowledge, understanding and skills are refined in further detail to ensure students' work is clearly focused and relevant. The textiles course will inspire the development of ideas relevant to textile design. Students will gain knowledge on how to respond to visits to museums, art galleries and artists.

The personal portfolio (60%) will be completed by the start of the spring term of Year 11.

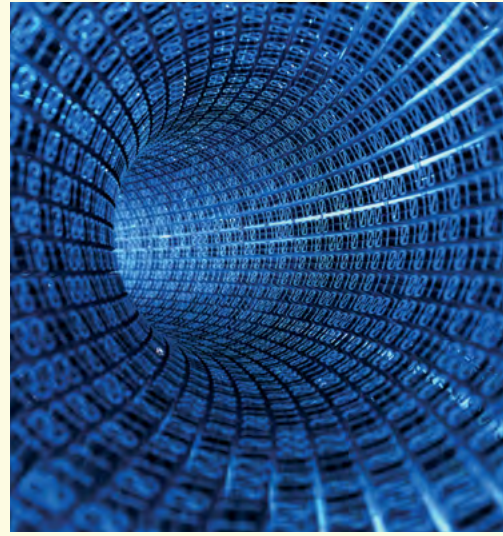
Component 2

Externally Set Assignment (Exam)

At the beginning of the spring term of Year 11, the exam board will release the externally set assignment. Students will respond to their chosen starting point and use the knowledge and skills they have developed during the Personal Portfolio to respond to their theme. Students will work on the exam during lessons and independently; this is called the preparatory studies. In late April or early May, students will complete the externally set assignment by completing a 10-hour supervised exam over a two-day period. Students will use this time to complete a final outcome linking to their preparatory studies.

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COMPUTER SCIENCE

Examination Board: Edexcel

The digital age needs computer scientists. Like it or not, you're living in it – this is an era of innovation. Computer programmes have all but infiltrated every aspect of our lives. Computer scientists theorise, design and develop software and hardware for the programs and apps we use day in, day out.

Why computing?

A little bit geeky? Yes. A little bit difficult? Yes.

Undeniably cool? Oh yes!

If you are constantly asking 'What happens if I change this?' or 'How does it work?' type of questions when you are supposed to be typing up your homework, then GCSE computer science may be the perfect choice for you.

What?

You will learn all about the hardware and software that make up a typical computer system and what really goes on inside those chips and circuit boards.

You will learn how to analyse problems in computational terms and write (code) real computer programs to solve them. Even better, you will develop the capacity to think creatively, innovatively, analytically, logically, critically and to see relationships between different aspects of computer science. You might, possibly, even be inspired to become the next Ada Lovelace or Tim Berners-Lee.

Computer Science GCSE Assessment

There are two examinations in Year 11:

Paper 1: Principles of Computer Science

Written examination: 1 hour and 30 minutes

50% of the qualification / 75 marks

Paper 2: Application of Computational Thinking

Onscreen examination: 2 hours

50% of the qualification / 75 marks

Your future in computing...

Where will it lead? Anywhere and everywhere! Plenty of computing students go on to study A Level computer science and beyond or seek employment-based training within a whole host of industries (technology, music, engineering, media, entertainment, web design).

Other students find that their practical skills are invaluable in supporting further study in science, engineering and maths courses at A Level.

Enrichment Opportunities

Industry visits, potential work experience placement(s), workshops, university masterclasses and robotics clubs.



DRAMA

Examination Board: AQA

Why choose Drama?

Drama is a practical and theoretical subject which examines what it is to be human. Through research and analysis of a play text, we can explore characters' thoughts, feelings and relationships in society and the world around them. Improvisation and text performances enable us to 'step into the shoes' of other people and sometimes even gain more understanding of ourselves through this process. If you enjoy performing, love going to the theatre and essentially are a team player, this is a good GCSE choice for you. You will learn about different styles of performance, practitioners, plays and playwrights, as well as gaining a practical understanding of acting technique and technical theatre, including the key theatre-maker roles of directors and designers.

Component 1: Understanding Drama

Written Paper, 1hr 45 min (worth 40%)

The written examination will assess your knowledge and understanding of performance and design through several

questions on your practically studied set text. You will also analyse and evaluate the work of theatre makers, answering one essay question based on your live theatre visits throughout the course.

Component 2: Devised Drama Performance

Performance (worth 20 marks)

Rehearsal log (worth 60 marks)

Performance of GCSE for Devised is 40%

You will work in a group to produce and perform a piece of original theatre in response to a theme or stimulus, demonstrating your creativity, teamwork and understanding of theatrical styles and forms. Throughout the process, you will keep a rehearsal log, analysing your experience and evaluating your final performance. Your practical performance (worth 20 marks) and your rehearsal log (worth 60 marks), are assessed by your teacher and reviewed by an external moderator.

Component 3: Text in Practice, Scripted

Performance Practical (worth 20%)

You will perform two extracts from a play for a public performance, demonstrating your knowledge of the whole play, including context and subtext in your performance, together with your acting skills and knowledge of creating, sustaining and communicating effective characterisation and relationships. These two performances are marked by an external examiner.

A programme of evening live theatre visits and a commitment to attend evening and one Sunday technical rehearsal in the period leading up to each production is an essential requirement.

Year 10 students rehearse during the autumn term towards the Christmas musical. They are also the House Directors for the Inter-House Drama Festival plays, which are rehearsed during the activities session and for a short period at the start of the summer term prior to the May performance date. Year 11 students rehearse during the first half of the autumn term towards their Devised Drama performance, and during the spring term toward their Scripted Performance Practical in early March.



FOOD PREPERATION & NUTRITION

Examination Board: OCR

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Food Preparation & Nutrition GCSE aims to equip learners with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to cook and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating.

Why choose Food Preparation & Nutrition?

Students will learn to develop life skills that enable them to feed themselves and others, affordably, now and in later life. Students will develop effective and safe cooking skills by planning, preparing and cooking using a variety of food commodities, cooking techniques and equipment. They will understand the relationship between diet, nutrition and health, including the physiological and psychological effects of poor diet and health.

The course is supported with resources produced by one of the world's most renowned chefs – Heston Blumenthal. His natural curiosity and scientific approach to cooking is an ideal collaboration. This will enthuse students as they discover the essentials of food science, build strong practical cookery skills and a good understanding of nutrition.

The GCSE links in with knowledge that the students gain through the biology syllabus currently offered at Notre Dame and the specification builds on previous practical skills, developed at Key Stage 3. During the course we have visits from professional chefs who share their knowledge and skills.

Course Content

Section A: Nutrition

Section B: Food: food provenance and food choice

Section C: Cooking and food preparation

Section D: Skills requirements: preparation and cooking techniques

Assessment

Food Preparation and Nutrition

Written examination, 1½ hours (worth 50%)

Food Investigation Task

Non-examined assessment (worth 15%)

Food Preparation Task

Non-examined assessment (worth 35%)

Non-examined assessment is split into two tasks. Both tasks are to be undertaken in Year 11. At the end of Year 11, there will be a written examination worth 50% of the final grade.



FRENCH

Examination Board: AQA French 8652

Why do you learn French?

Learning a language enhances students' employment prospects, widens their perspective and is a skill they can develop throughout their lives. Students can continue learning French by studying A Level in the Sixth Form.

- French is spoken on every continent.
- It is spoken as a first or second language in over 40 countries.
- It is spoken by 274 million people world-wide.
- France is the leader of modern telecommunications – a market with explosive growth potential.
- Recognised language of the European Union – the world's largest trading bloc.
- It is an official language of the United Nations and its organisations.
- France is the most visited tourist destination in the world.
- On average France receives 90 million tourists a year.

Knowledge and skills

Three themes called 'Identity and Culture', 'Local, National,

International and Global Areas of Interest' and 'Current and Future Study and Employment' comprise the course content; each of these is broken down into many sub-topics. This is a dynamic and stimulating programme which will help prepare you for life in modern Britain, as well as the international marketplace and the wider world. Learning a foreign language is a fantastic opportunity and leads to all kinds of personal progress and development. You will learn to use the foreign language much more widely, of course, but don't forget that qualities like confidence, interpersonal and communication skills also go hand in hand with language learning.

Assessment

Students will be examined in four skills at the end of the course: Listening (25%). Multiple choice / short-answer questions: identifying key points, deducing meaning, drawing conclusions. Speaking (25%). Role-play, discussion about pictures, presentation, question and answers about a topic. Reading (25%). Multiple choice / short-answer questions, and translating a text to English.

Writing (25%). Writing short sentences and a short text, email or blog giving and describing information, and translating a text from English.

The content of the GCSE course is divided into three topic areas:

Topic Area 1: Identity and culture

Topic Area 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest

Topic Area 3: Current and future study and employment.

Career paths

Knowledge of a foreign language is a skill that is highly sought-after in a wide variety of careers.

The following employment areas consider languages either essential or very highly desirable: business and commerce, bilingual secretarial work, the Civil Service (Diplomatic Service, Foreign and Commonwealth Service, Immigration Service), the hospitality industry, import and export, travel and tourism, translating and interpreting, teaching.

Languages do not just tell employers that you can communicate in another language, but that you are open-minded and interested in other cultures.



GEOGRAPHY

Examination Board: AQA

Geography GCSE allows students to learn more about the world around them and how people interact with it and each other. The skills you gain are applicable to a wide variety of other subjects and experiences, both in and outside of School.

Why choose Geography?

Michael Palin, BBC presenter, comedian and former President of the Royal Geographical Society stated that 'geography is the subject that holds the key to our future'. Watching the news on any given day shows how important geography is in the world today. It studies key issues including management of hazards such as volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and climate change; urban issues such as shanty towns, regeneration and sustainable cities; ecosystem threats and

management; economic development and globalisation; the growth of new industries such as tourism and e-commerce; population and migration; geopolitics.

Key geographical skills are developed, including the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for digital mapping together with conventional map skills, field work and techniques for statistical analysis. At Notre Dame, we follow the AQA Geography specification. Some of the topics studied in GCSE have already started in Year 9, which provides greater opportunities to develop students' understanding and examination technique. We aim to make the course interesting, varied and relevant to our ever-changing world.

Assessment is by the following three written examinations:

Paper 1: Living with the Physical Environment

(worth 35% of assessment)

Challenge of natural hazards; physical landscapes in the UK; the living world.

Paper 2: Challenges in the Human Environment

(worth 35% of assessment)

Urban challenges; the changing economic world; the challenge of resource management.

Paper 3: Geographical Applications

(worth 30% of assessment)

- Issue evaluation on a topic selected from any part of the specification.
- Assessment of fieldwork. In preparation for this, you will experience fieldwork in two contrasting environments.

Represents 15% of total assessment.

- Assessment of maths and statistical skills.

Represents 10% of total assessment.



HISTORY

Examination Board: AQA

An interest and enjoyment of history is a requirement for this GCSE course. Students will utilise the skills and knowledge they have already acquired during Years 7 to 9 and the course follows directly on from their Year 9 studies on the Great War.

The course is taught through a variety of teaching methods, including role plays, debates, computer simulations and film clips, as well as more traditional note taking. It is anticipated that students will have the opportunity to participate in the popular Berlin residential trip. The course is linear and consists of two examination papers, both taken at the end of Year 11.

Assessment 1: Understanding the modern world (worth 50%)

What is assessed?

Assessment 1 focuses on the modern world. In Section A, the students will study Germany 1890-1945. They will have to answer six compulsory questions. In Section B, the students will study Conflict and Tension 1918-1939. They will have to answer four compulsory questions.

How is it assessed?

Written examination: 2 hours / 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar).

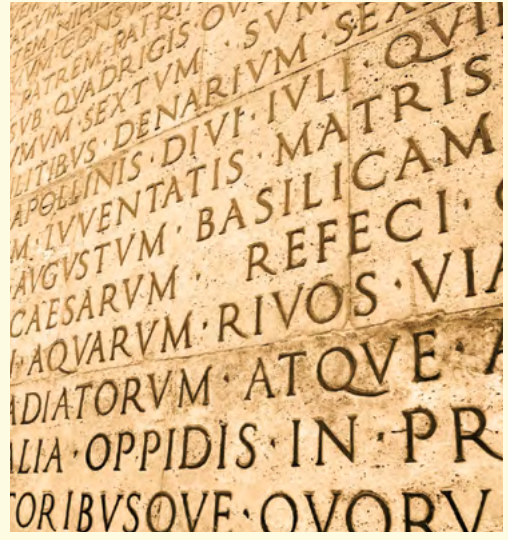
Assessment 2: Shaping the nation (worth 50%)

What is assessed?

In Assessment 2, students study events and developments which have shaped the history of the UK. Section A, the thematic study, enables students to look at key developments over a long sweep of time. They will study the British people and health (which particularly appeals to those considering a career in medicine), and will answer four compulsory questions. In Section B, a British depth study, incorporating the study of an historic environment, students look at the complexity of British society at a critical time in the country's development and how the historic environment was shaped by that society. Students for this option will study Elizabethan England and will answer four compulsory questions.

How is it assessed?

Written examination: 2 hours / 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar).



LATIN

Examination Board: OCR

The Roman Empire may have fallen more than 1500 years ago, but the Romans' accomplishments and their language of Latin still enjoy a lasting influence on European culture and language.

By studying Latin at GCSE, students will develop an awareness and an appreciation of the Latin language and its influence on other modern languages. They will also have the opportunity to read the original Latin words and sentiments of renowned Latin poets and historians. They will gain a greater understanding of key events in Roman mythology and history.

The GCSE course examines each student's ability to translate accurately from Latin into English, to answer comprehension questions on unprepared passages of Latin and also to show knowledge, understanding and appreciation of selected works of Latin literature, which will be studied over the course of Year 10 and Year 11. The GCSE language element of the course is started in Year 9, which means that, by Year 10, students will have covered at least 60 per cent of the grammar and the majority of the vocabulary needed for the exam. There is no coursework for GCSE Latin.

This is a GCSE course which is enjoyable, variable, undeniably useful and intellectually rewarding.

The GCSE consists of three written exam papers, all taken in the summer of Year 11:

Paper 1: Language
(worth 50%)

Paper 2: Latin Verse Literature A
(worth 25%)

Paper 3 :Latin Verse Literature B
(worth 25%)



MUSIC

Examination Board: Edexcel

Music at GCSE follows the Edexcel 9–1 syllabus. The overall aim is to develop your talent, skills and previous musical experience through a highly practical and engaging course.

Music GCSE caters for a wide range of musical tastes from Bach and Purcell to musical theatre, jazz, film music, world music and Queen!

The ability to read music is a distinct advantage for many parts of the course, but this skill will be fully developed during the course. The ability to either play an instrument or sing is necessary, but not both.

It is not necessary to have taken any graded music exams to choose to do GCSE music. However, if you play or sing to Grade 5 standard by the end of the course in Year 11, you

will be able to access the higher grade bands. Students will be encouraged to study ABRSM Music theory to complement their learning, though this is by no means compulsory.

There is no restriction on the style of music for the practical assessment.

The skills of composing will be taught during Year 10. The music department has a 10-station computer laboratory which will make composing both easy and fun. Whether you have any composing skills or not, or if you are a budding Beethoven or Adele, the course will suit you either way. There are no restrictions on the sort of music composed. Apart from compositional exercises given to you during the course, the final composition portfolio can include any style of music from classical to popular and be written for any instrument, voice or group.

You will listen to a wide range of music including classical instrumental music from 1700 to 1820; vocal music including musical theatre, rock and opera; music for stage and screen; and fusions including Afro-Celt and Latin jazz.

How will I be assessed?

There are three main components to the course:

Performing: assessed through one solo and one group performance
(worth 30%)

Composing: assessed on a folio of two pieces of music
(worth 30%)

Appraising: assessed in a written test
(worth 40%)



PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Examination Board: Edexcel

The GCSE in Physical Education provides an opportunity for pupils to study the wider aspects of sport while developing a deeper understanding of the skills and tactics of performance. It provides an excellent foundation for girls to continue with A Level Physical Education.

The syllabus covers the following areas:

- Physical performance: students are required to be assessed in three different activities (one must be a team game, one must be an individual)
- Analysis and improvement of performance with the use of data
- Applied anatomy and physiology: structure and functions of the cardio-respiratory system. Anaerobic and aerobic

- exercise. The short- and long-term effects of exercise
- Movement analysis
- Factors affecting performance
- Socio-cultural influences and wellbeing in physical exercise. Reasons for participating in physical activity. Health, fitness and wellbeing
- Sports psychology

The examinations and non-examination assessment will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the factors that underpin performance and involvement in physical activity and sport
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the factors that underpin performance and involvement in physical activity and sport
- AO3: Analyse and evaluate the factors that underpin performance and involvement in physical activity and sport

- AO4: Demonstrate and apply relevant skills and techniques in physical activity and sport. Analyse and evaluate performance

Assessment comprises two components:

Theory of Physical Education

(worth 60%)

Practical and Analytical Skills

In the practical component, students will be assessed in three sports.

(worth 40%)

At Notre Dame, the practical sports in which girls taking GCSE PE are expected to achieve the highest marks are: **Swimming Strokes, Netball, Hockey and Athletics**. If students are of a high level and training regularly in other sports that are on the 'approved' list, these can be considered for video assessment.



SPANISH

Examination Board: AQA Specification 8692

In the current international economic climate, people who speak Spanish are increasingly in demand.

In addition, when speaking one more language, apart from English, research shows that your brain is already more flexible and efficient at many important tasks: better academic performance, improved concentration, a more powerful memory, stronger communication skills and more creativity. Speaking Spanish allows you to communicate with around 500 million people across the world, making it easier to connect both personally and professionally. Those who learn Spanish are able to build relationships outside their English-speaking network, giving them options that monolingual English speakers may not have. The Spanish department is comprised of four dynamic teachers (three native ones), who strive to provide all students with a positive and successful language experience. The aim is to develop the ability to use Spanish effectively for uses of practical

communication and to acquire the skills and attitudes which will form a sound basis for further study, work and leisure. All students have a weekly speaking session with the Language Assistant in order to improve their fluency and confidence in the language.

Course content

Students study the following themes, on which the assessments are based:

Theme 1: People and lifestyle: identity and relationships with others; healthy living and lifestyle; education and work.

Theme 2: Popular culture: free time activities; customs, festivals and celebrations; celebrity culture.

Theme 3: Communication and world around us: travel and tourism; media and technology; the environment and where people live.

All four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are practised within each topic area through the use of authentic reading and listening passages. The language is used as frequently as possible in the classroom to encourage fluency. Grammatical

structures are gradually widened, enabling pupils to express themselves in more complex language. There is also an emphasis on the Spanish culture.

Examination

The GCSE has a Foundation Tier (Grades 5-1) and Higher Tier (Grades 9-4). Students take all four languages skills at the same tier and at the end of Year 11. Each skill is worth 25% of the GCSE.

The listening and the reading papers contain all comprehension questions in English, a mix of written and non-verbal / MCQ tasks. Dictation in the listening (new task) and translation (just sentences) from Spanish into English in the reading are also included in these papers.

Speaking is split in three parts: role-play, reading aloud task and unprepared short conversation (new task) and photo card discussion.

Writing consists of a 50- and 90-word essay for the Foundation Tier and 90 and 150 words for the Higher Tier. It also includes a translation (just sentences) from English into Spanish.

ENRICHMENT

Once students have selected their options, they can then choose an enrichment activity. There are three options to choose from.

STUDY
FURTHER MATHS
HPQ

Students who have learning support and want to continue this at GCSE, should choose Study.

For students looking for more challenge in their learning, further maths and the HPQ allow an opportunity to explore deeper into their studies. Both of these are examinable Level 2 (GCSE) courses, with homework and assessments. Please note, the maths department can advise on a student's suitability to the further maths course.





STUDY

Study

This will create space to fit 1-2-1 support into a student's timetable, as well as giving them three hours of study time in School over the two-week timetable. Study is a good option for students who participate in plenty of clubs/sports/music either in or out of School, where their time in the evenings is limited.

FURTHER MATHS

Further Maths Examination Board: AQA

Further Maths

The Level 2 further maths content is divided into six main topic areas:

1. Number
2. Algebra
3. Coordinate Geometry
4. Calculus
5. Matrix Transformations
6. Geometry

Why choose AQA Level 2 certificate in further maths?

This qualification is designed for high-achieving students who want to deepen their understanding of advanced mathematical skills, especially in algebra. It helps students prepare for further studies at A Level, by offering extra challenge beyond the regular GCSE Maths curriculum. It is not a replacement for GCSE Maths, but an additional

qualification that builds on what you will be learning in maths at KS4, focusing more on algebra and geometry. The course emphasises technical accuracy, strong reasoning, and problem-solving skills, which are important for future studies in maths.

Assessment

Two papers, each 1 hour 45 minutes. Students will have access to calculators for the 2nd paper.

Who is suited to this course?

Those students who are expected to achieve grades 7, 8 or 9 in GCSE maths and are likely to progress on to studying mathematics and possibly further mathematics at A Level.



HPQ – HIGHER PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Examination Board: AQA

The Higher Projects Qualification provides an excellent opportunity for students to extend their learning beyond the classroom and explore their passion for a subject.

The HPQ grants students the freedom to investigate a subject of their choice, fostering a love for independent learning and encouraging them to take responsibility for their studies. This course aims to equip students with invaluable, highly transferable skills, such as time management, critical analysis, and public speaking.

It is a Level 2 qualification, which is equivalent to a GCSE. It requires students to carry out research on a topic that they have chosen that is not covered by their other qualifications. They then use this research to produce a written report and, in the case of practical projects, an artefact or a production. A student can take inspiration from something studied in class or something completely unrelated to their studies.

Assessment for this qualification is entirely coursework based, with no examinations. Students complete a production log or diary, a written report and a presentation. The majority of the work is completed in Year 10, allowing students to use this time in Year 11 as study periods.

The course is designed to provide a clear structure within which all learners can:

- develop transferable and core skills to apply in a future workplace, apprenticeship or further study
- become inquisitive and independent learners
- experience new areas and methods of study, including how to plan and review their progress
- increase motivation and self-discipline
- use ICT and appropriate technologies with confidence

It will involve extended autonomous work by the student and require a total of 60 guided learning hours. This comprises 30 hours of taught lessons and 30 hours of independent work with substantial support.

Students are required, with appropriate supervision, to:

- choose an area of interest
- draft a title and aims of the project for formal approval by the School
- plan, research and carry out the project
- deliver a presentation to a non-specialist audience
- provide evidence of all stages of project development and production for assessment

The taught skills lessons include but are not limited to:

- Primary and secondary sources
- Ethics of research
- Evaluating sources
- Health and safety
- Time management – SMART goals and Gantt charts
- Smart reading and Cornell note-taking
- Referencing and bibliographies
- Writing academic reports
- Evaluating written reports
- Editing and proofreading

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