

Building skyscrapers with the curriculum

The curriculum studied by students can be compared to building a skyscraper. First School (KS1) lays a broad foundation in areas such as literacy, numeracy and traditional subjects like Science and History. In Middle School (KS2), the curriculum aims to develop and deepen those foundations, and once in Secondary School (KS3) the curriculum builds on those foundations creating more detail. As their studies continue into KS4 and beyond, our students' curriculum begins to narrow as they make choices about what their future will look like and the subjects they wish to pursue at GCSE, college and potentially university. Our current Year 9 students now have their first opportunity to choose their curriculum.... shape what their next two years at Droitwich Spa High School will look like based on the subjects they opt to follow.



We want our students to be ambitious about their future and pursue their goals. Those skyscrapers also represent their future jobs and career opportunities, architecture, civil engineering, finance, banking, insurance, marketing, IT, HR, here and globally. If their skyscraper isn't quite as tall; could they be at the pinnacle of high-tech engineering in a workshop, designing parts, products, or electronics or maybe their office isn't even in a building with aspirations of being a field scientist, builder, or locksmith or maybe their goal is to nurture a talent or hobby by being part of a design team or working creatively. Whatever our students' aspirations we want them to be successful and fulfill their potential, which starts with helping them make smart choices about their options.

The Options Process

What must I study?

Every student in Year 10 and 11 will take the following subjects:

THE NEXT TWO YEARS	Typical hours per fortnight in Year 10	Typical hours per fortnight in Year 11
English Language and Literature (two separate qualifications, worth a total of two GCSEs)	8	8
Maths	8	8
Science (Combined Science if not opting for Separate Science worth a total of two GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry & Physics) <i>(Students may opt for Triple Science see below)</i>	10	11
Core PE/ Philosophy & Ethics /PSHE <i>(Students may opt for GCSE Religious Studies see below)</i>	4	3

What can I choose?

Students in Year 9 can then choose to study subjects from the list below in Years 10 and 11.

We ask that they select **FOUR** subjects and **ONE** reserve from the table below.

At least **one** of those four choices must be from the humanities and languages column.

(List below)

Humanities and Languages	Arts (visual and performing)	Technologies	Others
History	Art	Computer Science	Religious Studies
Geography	Dance	Creative iMedia	Business Studies/Economics
French	Drama	Design and Technology	Child Development
German	Music	Engineering	Health and Social Care
	Performing Arts (VQ) Music Pathway	Food and Nutrition	PE / Sports Science
			Triple Science (Biology, Chemistry & Physics).

During this process we have a duty of care to ensure that students make smart choices, and it is important to be transparent regarding some of the new subjects available. It is important not to underestimate subjects such as Triple Science, Engineering, Computer Science, GCSE PE, and GCSE Music.

Triple Science will give students a GCSE in each science subject and as a result they will have studied, 50% more content some of which is harder content and 6 additional practicals compared to GCSE Combined Science.

Engineering has a higher mathematical demand, using and manipulating calculations compared to GCSE Design Technology.

Computer Science has a high computational demand understanding how computers work, programming, and data handling in applications versus focusing on the suite of programmes available to users.

PE GCSE has a final practical assessment worth 40% of the total grade assessed across 3 sports all equally weighted. The anatomy and physiology of the course is complex and detailed.

GCSE Music focuses on three main areas of study: Performance, Composition, Listening and Appraising. Students will learn about a range of types of music, including vocal, instrumental, music for film, pop, jazz, fusion, and new music.

To support students opting for Music or Sport our teaching staff will guide students in identifying which of the offerings for Music and Sport would best suit them to ensure they can fulfil their potential.

What should I consider when choosing my options?

Firstly, GCSEs are challenging and there is no easy option. Our key piece of advice is pick what you enjoy and pick what you are good at! Don't make choices based on whether your friends are doing it or because you like a particular teacher as you may not be with your friends or that teacher. It is important to thoroughly research anything new don't opt for it without knowing what is really involved. There is information in the Options booklet every student received either at our Guided Choices evening (22/2/2024) or from their tutor on Friday, 23rd February. Further details of each course can be found here:

<https://website.droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk/index.php/curriculum/year-9-into-year-10-options/>

At Droitwich Spa High School, we are lucky to have an Independent Careers Advisor – Mrs L Stevens. Her advice in making smart choices is:

- You enjoy the subject and don't mind working hard to do well in it.
- You know or you think you will be good at the subject.
- The subject combination may link to future career ideas.
- The subject interests you.
- It suits your preferences for exams/coursework.

A good mix of subjects will keep a range of options open. You could choose to take subjects included in the English Baccalaureate (English, Maths, Science, History or Geography and French and/or German). Traditional subjects like these are valued by employers, sixth forms, colleges, and universities.

If you have strong ideas on the sort of course or career you wish to pursue in future, you should check entry requirements for courses or careers or speak to a careers adviser or subject teachers in school. Some higher-level courses will require you to have taken the subject at GCSE to progress to A level/ Level 3 diploma or degrees. You may want to try a new subject which is only offered from Key Stage 4. It is often the case that these subjects, whilst helpful and whilst they may still be “smart” choices for you are not required at GCSE to progress to higher levels.

Art and Design based jobs such as fine artist, graphic designer, sculptor, illustrator, animator, wallpaper designer usually require you to take an art or design-based course at a high level. For higher level art and design courses you'll need a portfolio of work, and evidence of drawing skills. Taking a GCSE art and design course, or a Foundation or Higher Diploma in Creative and Media, can be a useful way of starting to develop both your portfolio and your drawing skills - as art and design course admission tutors like to see both your artistic/design abilities and also how your skills have developed over time.

Engineering and Technology professional level jobs such as civil engineer, architectural technologist, or structural engineer usually require you to have taken maths, plus physics or an equivalent construction or engineering Diploma at a Higher level (level 3). Design and technology at GCSE, or a Foundation or Higher Diploma in Engineering or Construction and the Built Environment, can also be useful subjects to demonstrate to employers/universities your technical ability and interest.

Language based jobs such as translator, interpreter or European lawyer usually require you to have studied two languages at GCSE. This is to give you a broad base to go on and do the higher-level language study you'll need for these competitive jobs.

Practical based jobs such as: carpenter, chef, hairdresser, and builder usually require evidence of practical ability. It's a good idea to choose a subject to demonstrate this - for example, food technology if you're keen to be a chef, or art/design if you are keen to be a hairdresser, or the foundation or Higher Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment if you are keen to go into building. Sometimes the requirement may be for you to have taken the subject, and shown interest, rather than achieved a particular grade or level.

Scientific jobs such as: medical doctor, vet and biochemist often require specific sciences - for example chemistry plus one other, preferably biology, for medicine; chemistry, biology, and physics for some veterinary science courses.

If you need further advice there are several resources available to help you:

- Our website: <https://website.droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk/index.php/student-development-and-support/careers/>
- Discuss your options with Lindsay, our Independent Careers Adviser in school. You can reach her at: group-careers@droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk
- Talk to your subject teachers.
- Talk to your tutor - we are still on the other end of an email.
- Contact an adviser from the National Careers Service FREE on 0800 100 900
- Talk to your parents or carers.

What is the timeline for making my choices?

- Tuesday, 20th February we launched the Year 9 Options assembly.
- Thursday, 22nd February students and their parents/carers were able to attend our Guided Choices evening, met and talk with subject teachers about the diverse courses on offer.
- Monday, 26th February the options form went live
<https://droitwichspahighschool4005.sharepoint.com/sites/DSHS.StudentsYear09/SitePages/Y9-Options-Sign-Up-Page.aspx>
- Monday, 4th March, Year 9 written reports will be emailed to parents.
- Thursday, 7th March, Year 9 Parents Evening
- Friday, 15th March, deadline for submitting options.

Frequently Asked Questions.

Q. If I complete the form well before 15th March, will I guarantee my options.

A. No, once the deadline has been reached and all students have submitted their choices, we will then review the list and confirm final choices.

Q. Will all students get all their choices?

A. We do our very best to honour all requests though on some occasions there will be cases where this isn't feasible due to the restrictions that we need to work with. Students must therefore submit a reserve choice and are encouraged to make sure that this is a subject they would wish to pursue in place of their 4th choice. Where this is the case, they will be made aware of this as soon as possible.

Q. What happens if I change my mind once I have completed the form?

A. The form can only be completed once before the deadline of the 15th of March. Where a student would wish to make a change before the deadline, they should email Mr Hayman (haymanpm@droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk) who will reset the form. Where a change is necessary after the deadline, we encourage students to make us aware as soon as possible by emailing Mr Hayman who will try to accommodate the change as best as possible.

Q. My child receives SEND provision and I have concerns about the possibility of them following the traditional route of four GCSE options. What can I do?

A. We ask that all students complete the form with 4 choices and 1 reserve. For students who perhaps the traditional route of four GCSE options may not be suitable. Mr Hall or Mrs Moss will be in touch to discuss other possible routes later.