

Options Overview

March 2021

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils,

Over the next few weeks pupils shall be making their option choices in readiness for the next academic year. The most recent lockdown has disrupted our intended options process but we are confident that the process we have put together will prove equally effective in enabling pupils to follow the most suitable courses for their needs. With this in mind, I have put together the typical questions that are asked each year and a response for each one:

How many qualifications will each pupil gain at the end of Year 11? The vast majority of pupils will gain nine qualifications at the end of Year 11. These are broken down as follows: English Language, English Literature, Maths, two grades for Combined Science, RE, Option 1, Option 2 and Option 3. As you will note, the majority of qualifications are taken as part of the core subjects rather than options. Subsequently, this means the majority of pupil time during the course of a school week is spent in core subjects.

Do pupils have to take PE? Yes, all pupils have to take Core PE. This is non-examined and fulfils the statutory guidance as laid out by the government. Core PE lessons are practical lessons only. If pupils wish to gain a qualification in PE, they can opt for this as part of the options process.

Are there some subjects that pupils must opt for? This year pupils will make three selections. Of these three selections, one of them must be either **Computer Science, French, Geography or History**. This ensures that the curriculum that pupils are following is broad and balanced and in line with government expectations. There will be a tiny minority of pupils who will be exempt from this. Those pupils will be contacted directly.

What is the EBacc route? This is the name given to a suite of subjects that increases a pupil's chances of securing a place in a university of their choice. There is no certificate but simply a recognition that a pupil has gained qualifications in the following subjects: English Language, English Literature, Maths, Combined Science, a language (French at St Antony's) and a Humanities subject (Geography or History).

Do pupils have to follow the EBacc route? Government expectation is that more pupils should follow this route each year. With this in mind, we shall indicate those pupils who we believe should be following this pathway. It will not be compulsory for all pupils but it is certainly recommended and all pupils will be welcome to take EBacc subjects whether or not this has been indicated by us.

What restrictions are placed on option choices? If a pupil enjoys a subject then we strongly believe they should opt for that subject regardless of ability. There are, however, some

practical considerations which may impact on pupil choice. The list below details some of the main restrictions/issues:

- Pupils can only take one subject from the following to maintain a broad curriculum: Art & Photography, Graphics & Textiles, Engineering, Food and Nutrition.
- Class sizes vary a great deal in the options in accordance with practicality. For example, a class size in Food is limited to eighteen in contrast with History which may reach as high as thirty.
- If too many pupils opt for a particular subject some may have to follow a reserve choice.
- Not all option choices will be granted. We shall endeavour to grant all choices but putting option blocks together is a complex process and mathematically it will not be possible to make the three option blocks suit everyone's choices.

What next? The following bullet points detail the process from this point onwards:

- Please read through the option sheets which have been placed on the school website. In addition, Subject Leaders have produced explanatory videos for each course.
- Following this, pupils, parents and carers are welcome to speak to subject teachers about their preferences. For parents and carers this can be done through the normal channels i.e. by email or telephone. During this period, I too shall speak to individual pupils about their likely choices.
- On Monday 29th March, pupils shall take home the official Options form. Pupils should return these prior to the commencement of the Easter holidays on Thursday 1st April.
- Once this information has been returned, the information will be analysed and Option blocks shall be put together to satisfy the maximum number of choices that have been made.
- Following the above, further information will be shared post-Easter.
- Finally, further on in this document you will find guidance on how to make selections. I hope you will find this useful.

Thank you for reading this overview. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions and I shall endeavour to respond as soon as possible.

Kind regards

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How to Make the Right Option Choices

- Think about what subjects you like and enjoy at the moment – you are more likely to be successful in a subject if you enjoy what you are doing
- Find out about the skills you are going to need for the option subject – do you have these skills? Are you willing to learn them?
- Look at how the subject is assessed – will you cope with that?
- What kind of learner are you and will the option choices you have made help you be more successful?
- Know what your choices might lead to after St Antony's and how they might help you in the future – College? Apprenticeship? Employment?

Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing Options

- You are not the same as your friend so do not pick an option because your friend is doing it – do not follow the crowd
- Do not worry too much about your option choices being relevant to a job – you are very likely to change your mind about what job you want to do in the next few years
- Don't pick a subject if you haven't given it some proper thought – do not make last minute choices
- Don't pick an option because you think it will be an easy choice
- Whether you like or do not like a teacher is not a good way to choose an option
- Avoid the trap of thinking that a course is designed for girls only or boys only