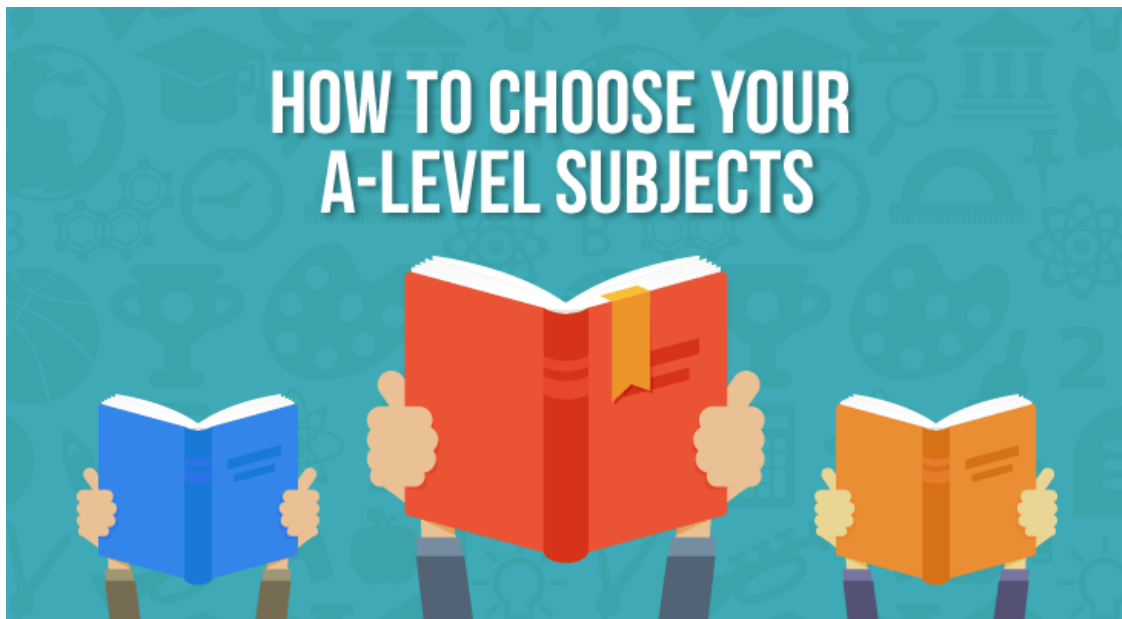


Which A Levels should I choose?



- **Subject choices**
- **Student advice**
- **Where certain subjects could take you**
- **University course requirements**
- **University entry requirements**
- **Useful links for further research**



TARPORLEY
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE
ASPIRE • LEARN • ACHIEVE

What can I study at Tarporley Sixth Form College?

Art and Design	History
Biology	IT (BTEC)
Business Studies	Media Studies
Chemistry	Music
Computing	Drama and Theatre Studies
Design & Technology (Textiles)	Photography
Design & Technology (Product Design)	Physics
Economics	Physical Education
English Literature	Psychology
English Language	Maths
French	Further Maths
Geography	Religious Studies
German (Not available for 2021)	Spanish

What are the entry requirements?

- A minimum of 5 GCSEs at Grade 5 and above
- Preferably Grade 6 or higher in subjects you plan to study

What if I fail English or Maths but do well in my other GCSEs?

It is possible that you would get a place at Sixth Form, this has happened in the past, but this place would be entirely dependent on you re-sitting the exam you failed. You have to re-sit English Language or Maths no matter what you choose to do after Year 11 and this is a government directive. The decision regarding your place here at Tarporley would be down to the Director of Sixth Form and it would not be guaranteed.

Which A-levels should you take?



Choosing three (and occasionally four) subjects to take at A-level is not a decision you should take lightly. The A Levels you pick now can – in some cases - impact what you do later, namely the degree courses that you will be able to apply for and the universities that will consider you.

The reason you take a particular subject at A-level will usually come down to one of these three scenarios:

- **you need it to pursue a particular career**
- **it's a subject you enjoy and are good at**
- **it's a subject you've not studied before but you think will suit you**

Either way, be prepared for a big jump in the level of difficulty when you transition from GCSE to A Level. You'll also see differences in the way you're taught and in what is expected of you, with the need for a lot of independent study, organisation and self-motivation.



However, if you don't know what you want to do in the future, you can still make smart choices now that will leave you in the best position in two years' time.

Facilitating Subjects

Facilitating subjects are a handful of A-level subjects commonly asked for in universities' entry requirements, regardless of the course you're applying to. This could allow you to keep your degree options open, but these tend to be the more traditional subjects rather than modern, creative or technological subjects – which of course do not suit everybody. **EVERY subject has its own merit, challenge and value at A Level and will develop useful and transferable skills.** However, the facilitating subjects often favoured by Russell Group universities are:

- **Biology**
- **Chemistry**
- **English**
- **Geography**
- **History**
- **Maths**
- **Modern Foreign Languages**
- **Physics**



Please note that the best university for different subjects varies a great deal. Non-Russell Group universities often have superb links with businesses and are better for modern, creative or technical subjects – so do your research and consider all factors. If you've got your heart set on studying Media, Music, Drama or Art, those subjects are more likely to form part of your A-level choices, even for top universities. Be open-minded and well-informed. Many courses do not specify specific subjects at all and simply require you to meet their tariff point or grade criteria. Taking a subject that you love in conjunction with at least one (or two) of the facilitating subjects will provide you with a broad base. **Be assured, THERE ARE NO EASY SUBJECTS AT A LEVEL!**

Final thoughts:

1. Choose subjects you enjoy – you'll do better in your studies if you have an interest in the subject!
2. Choose subjects in which you are predicted to get good GCSE grades – chances are you'll do well in these subjects at A-level, too, earning you better grades and therefore more university options.
3. If you are unsure about what to do beyond A Levels, then choose a range of subjects –this will give you the greatest choice when it comes to applying for university. It's also worth thinking about the transferrable skills demonstrated by different subject choices. For example:
 - Essay-based subjects such as English or History demonstrate analytical skills and critical thinking.
 - Science subjects such as Physics or Mathematics demonstrate logic and familiarity with scientific principles.
 - Practical subjects such as Art, Theatre Studies or Music demonstrate self-discipline and creative thinking.
4. Talk to your teachers and read the syllabus for each of the courses you're potentially interested in.

Going into work after A Levels?

- If you have a specific career in mind, check to see if you will need specific A Level subjects. Look at job profiles to find out more.
- Do your research – explore the job profiles, industries, and employers offering the kind of work and job roles you're interested in.
- Are you interested in Apprenticeships or Traineeships?
- Higher apprenticeship — can lead to NVQ Level 4 and above, or a Foundation Degree.
- From September 2015, some universities started offering Degree Apprenticeships — these enable Apprentices to achieve a full Bachelor's or Master's Degree as part of their Apprenticeships.
- Some careers may be more flexible than you think. For example, if you want to be an Accountant you can do so with any degree or A level subjects (or equivalent) – there's no need to study Maths, Economics or Business Studies unless you feel like it. And you don't even have to go to university if you don't want to.
- However, for other careers you need specific subjects. For example if you want to become an Engineer then you need Maths A level or equivalent, and usually other science subjects such as Physics too, in order to get onto an Engineering Degree, Degree Apprenticeship or a Higher Apprenticeship.

Research your career ideas by looking at job profiles:

<https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors>

<https://www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options/employment>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles>

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers>

You can start developing essential skills and experience while increasing your employability. Having work experience and building your CV will make you more attractive to employers, and will open up more job opportunities in the future.

Which university courses require specific subjects in their entry requirements?

Some degree subjects or specific universities will ask for certain A-level subjects in their entry requirements – these are often more vocational subjects so this is something to research carefully.

Below are a few examples to give you an idea of what to expect, **but there is variation between universities** – and of course HUNDREDS of other courses and combinations of subjects exist. **The information provided below can change and therefore students should always consult university websites for the most up-to-date admissions criteria:**

Anthropology	Some courses require a science (may be Biology) – subjects which involve cultural elements in study will be advantageous (e.g. Geography, Psychology, History)
Archaeology	Some courses require a science (may be Biology) – depends on emphasis in the course. History will be advantageous.
Architecture	A diverse combination is often a strength. Portfolio submission is very likely which is very hard unless Art is studied. In addition, Physics and Maths may be required for some courses and knowledge of History and/or Language shows cultural appreciation.
Art	Art + portfolio submission. Photography and Media Studies useful.
Biology	Biology plus 2 other sciences including Maths e.g. Biology, Chemistry, Maths.
Bioscience	Chemistry and Biology usually both required. A third 'science' (i.e. Maths or Physics) also helpful.
Business and Management	Mathematics required for some courses. Business Studies or Economics may be an advantage. Consider a range of subjects that shows a diversity of skills in numeracy and literacy.
Chemistry	Chemistry plus two other sciences including Maths (e.g. Chemistry, Physics, Maths).
Computer Science	Maths is required on some courses. Computer Science and ICT are clearly advantageous, along with Maths, Further Maths, Physics. Variation across universities.
Dentistry	Biology and Chemistry. Mathematical skills are important. An essay-based subject can also assist. Work experience essential – greatly preferred to show a long term (substantially over 1 year) commitment to entry to the profession. Work experience should be varied – not just work shadowing. Highly competitive. Performance in interview critical. BMAT or UCAT required for virtually every course. A Level students could take Physics instead of Mathematics to show the mathematical skills.
Economics	Mathematics required for many courses, Further Mathematics required for some. Economics advantageous. Highly competitive. Different courses will look for slightly different profiles in terms of raw academic profile and engaging personal statement.
Engineering	Mathematics and Physics required. Further Mathematics required for many courses. (or Maths and Chemistry for Chemical Engineering)
English	English Literature or English Language required. Additional essay-based subjects will be an advantage as may be a Modern Foreign Language.
Fashion & Textiles	No specific requirements. Textiles, Photography and Art advantageous.

Geography	Geography required. Science / Maths vs. other Humanities / Languages might be preferred depending on route as social science or science in the degree (sometimes available as BSc or BA).
History	History required. Other Humanities / English or Modern Language often seen as an advantage.
International Relations	No specific requirements although ability to convey current knowledge of real world issues may be an advantage – e.g. Economics / Geography. Foreign Language has obvious relevance.
Law	No specific requirements. ‘Traditional’ and evaluative subjects, especially English Literature and History are preferred over A Level Law. Ability to convey logic, to handle large amounts of information, skills of analysis etc. Note requirement for LNAT or other aptitude test is a requirement at some universities. Whatever taken, students must achieve high results.
Marketing	No specific requirements. Subjects like Business and Psychology relate well and English and Media Studies show good communication skills and audience awareness.
Mathematics	As much Mathematics as possible. Physics or Economics likely to be an advantage as a complement. Further Mathematics a requirement of many courses if taking A Level.
Media	Media Studies and English are preferred subjects. Art, Photography and Psychology also complement this subject.
Medicine	Biology and Chemistry. Mathematical skills are important. An essay-based subject can also assist. Work experience essential – greatly preferred to show a long term (substantially over 1 year) commitment to entry to the profession. Work experience should be varied – not just work shadowing. Highly competitive. Performance in interview critical. BMAT or UCAT required for virtually every course. A Level students could take Physics instead of Mathematics to show the mathematical skills.
Midwifery	Subject combination similar to that for medicine. Work experience in medically-related areas and performance in interview essential.
Modern Language	First modern language, a second modern foreign language is likely to be an advantage. Depending upon the course, additional study of Literature may be advantageous.
Music	Music. Other subjects may influence depending on type of music degree applied for. For example, study of history, literature, language or other evaluative subject can be relevant. Audition likely.

Natural Science	Specific requirements depend on the exact course and the university chosen – this degree subject varies notably in content and options between institutions. Two sciences plus mathematics would be the base-line requirement.
Nursing	Courses usually ask for biology or another science. Chemistry and Psychology are useful. Requirements do vary from university to university. Work experience essential. Diversity of work experience highly advisable - medical environments / community / volunteering etc.
Pharmacology	Chemistry plus two other sciences including Maths (e.g. Chemistry, Biology, Maths).
Philosophy	Mathematics an advantage for many courses (logic). Diversity of subjects may be an advantage with at least one essay-based subject. RS is helpful as is a Modern Language.
Physics	As much Physics and Maths as you can! Further Maths advantageous. Other subjects such as Chemistry can help – depends on exact course
Physiotherapy	Biology is essential and PE is requested for some courses. Scientific subjects and Maths are advantageous. Work experience essential. Diversity of work experience highly advisable – medical environments / community / volunteering etc.
Politics	No specific requirement. Ability to show engagement with current issues (e.g. Economics, Geography) will be useful as may be knowledge and study of History or RS. Foreign language likely to be a strong asset.
Psychology	Psychology obviously. Mathematics and Biology, or at least one of these, is advisable. Courses vary – check entry requirements according to the route – depends on how scientific / medical the course is.
Sports Science	A Science subject (Biology or Chemistry mostly) and PE are required – other subjects such as Psychology, Maths and Physics are also useful.
Teaching	Must have GCSE 4/5 above in Maths, English and Science. It is useful to study subjects on the Primary educational curriculum - Psychology and English Language are also more broadly useful. For secondary teaching you will have to major in your chosen subject. Work experience essential. Diversity of work experience highly advisable – community / volunteering / working with children.
Theology	No specific requirements. Philosophy / RS, History and Modern Language likely to be an advantage.
Veterinary Science	As for medicine. Work experience essential. Diversity of work experience highly advisable – farms, domestic, volunteering in zoos, animal welfare, abattoir. Highly competitive.

There is more course guidance here and on university's own websites:

- <https://www.ucas.com/explore/subjects>
- <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/what-a-levels-do-you-need-for-the-degree-you-want-to-study>
- <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/a-level-explorer>
- <https://www.whatuni.com/advice/ultimate-guides/the-ultimate-guide-to-choosing-your-a-levels/57528/>
- <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/can-you-get-into-university-if-youre-studying-btecs>
- <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-course/what-is-the-russell-group>

THS Student Advice, 2020:

“Don’t be persuaded by friends to take a certain subject – I know people who did this and regretted their choice when they realised it didn’t suit them, but it was too late to change.”

“Don’t think you cannot do subjects that you didn’t do at GCSE. I chose Psychology and Media Studies - both were new to me at A Level but I loved them and did better in the end than some students who had done Media at GCSE. I had to work hard to catch up at first but it paid off. I now study Marketing at uni so feel sure I chose the right subjects for me.”

“Choose subjects you enjoy. It means you are more likely to study hard and be motivated to learn if you enjoy them. Obvious but so true.”

“Don’t choose subjects that you think you SHOULD do rather than those that you WANT to do – unless you have a specific career in mind and you NEED a certain subject for that course. A Levels are hard so it’s an important decision that you want to get right.”

“Speak to your teachers who know you well – they can advise whether that subject will suit you at A Level or not and listen to them.”

“Think about the % of coursework and the weighting of exams too. Think about how you work and how you cope with pressure – some courses are 100% exam whereas some have more non-exam assessment than others. These are really important things to consider.”

What are university entry requirements?

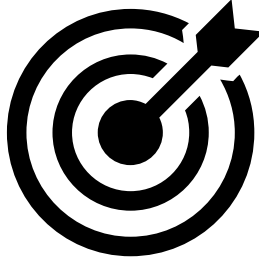
Entry requirements for university are formal criteria you must meet in order to be considered for a degree course you're applying to. These criteria are set by the university offering that course, to determine whether you're capable of meeting its objectives.

A course's entry requirements should be your first port of call when researching universities and courses. There's no point getting too excited about one if it's unlikely you'll be able to meet these in the first place.

When you apply to universities you have to write a personal statement and your college will provide a reference. These can be very persuasive and influential, but universities will also have other specific entry requirements and these could take many forms:

- **A-levels** – usually universities ask for three required grades, from A*-E. There could be minimum grades expected in one or two specific subjects. 88.5% of students accepted on to a higher education course last year applied with A-levels, according to UCAS.
- **UCAS Points:** In order to measure scores and grades across qualifications, admissions officers use the UCAS TARIFF system to translate these into UCAS points.

As an example, A-level or BTEC grades receive the following UCAS points:

<p>A* = 56 A = 48 B = 40 C = 32 D = 24 E = 16</p>		<p>Distinction Star = A* = 56 Distinction = A = 48 Merit = C = 32 Pass = E = 16</p> <p>Most universities accept BTEC as an A Level equivalent but Some courses will require 3 A Levels – seek advice if required.</p>
--	---	---

So Universities asking for 128 points, expect their students to have at least AAB; 112 points means BBC; 96 points means CCC etc.

- **GCSEs** - Most universities will look for a Grade 9 to a Grade 4/5 at GCSE in English, Maths and possibly Science. Specific courses may also ask for minimum grades in certain relevant GCSE subjects, while competitive courses will look for strong GCSE results as an indicator of your academic ability. You need to read up on this carefully as failure to meet these grades could result in an automatic rejection.

Admissions tests: For more selective universities and competitive courses, you might be asked to sit a special exam to help admissions staff find the strongest candidates. If you're applying to Oxford or Cambridge or want to study a subject like Medicine or Dentistry, this will likely apply to you. Some (but not all) Law Schools also require an admissions test. The score you obtain will be used when considering your application. These exams typically test your aptitude and other natural skills that would make you a suitable student for that university or course.

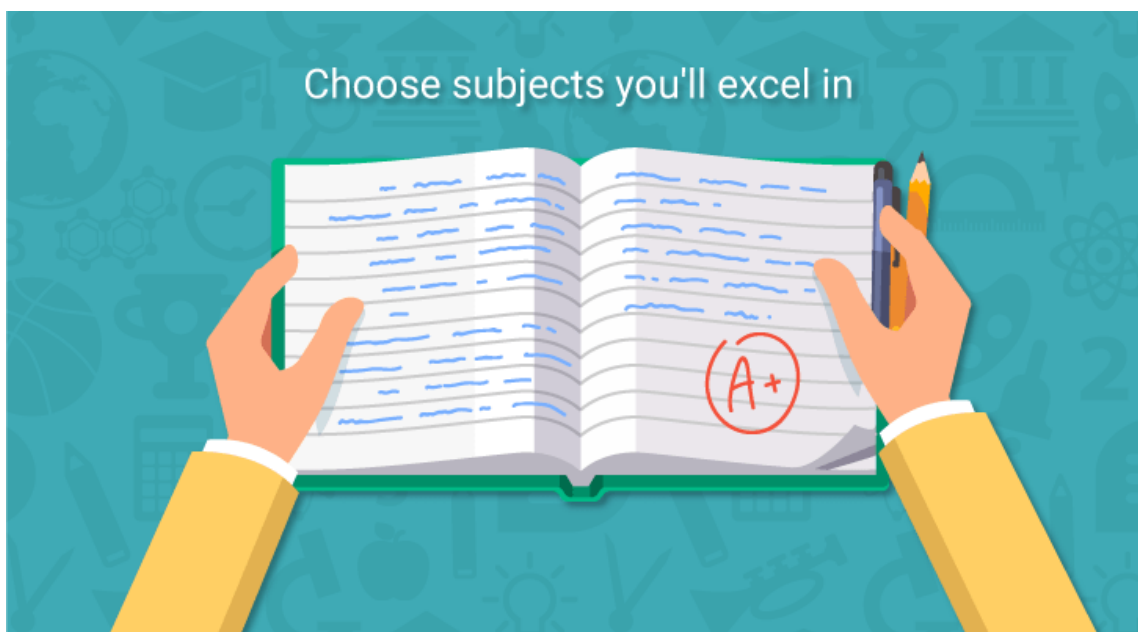


OXBRIDGE OXFORD OR CAMBRIDGE (YOU CANNOT APPLY TO BOTH)	Taken in college during November (usually half term). Tests vary according to subject.	Booked through the Exams Officer in school.
MEDICINE & DENTISTRY: UCAT REQUIRED BY ALL OTHER MED SCHOOLS, EXCLUDING THOSE 8 LISTED BELOW	Taken in a Pearson Centre, off site (where you take your Driving Theory Test). Usually taken in the summer holiday of Year 12.	Booked independently.
MEDICINE & DENTISTRY: BMAT BRIGHTON & SUSSEX / IMPERIAL / LANCASTER / UCL / CAMBRIDGE / LEEDS / OXFORD / KEELE	Taken in a Pearson Centre, off site (where you take your Driving Theory Test). Usually taken in the summer holiday of Year 12.	Booked independently.
LAW: LNAT BRISTOL / DURHAM / GLASGOW / KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON / NOTTINGHAM / OXFORD / UCL / LSE	Taken in a Pearson Centre, off site (where you take your Driving Theory Test). Testing occurs between September and January. Oxford must take theirs before January 15 th ,	Booked independently.

- **Interviews:** A few universities - including Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College London - interview most or all of their applicants. Elsewhere, some subjects are more likely than others to interview applicants. This can vary from one university to another so this is something to research – some can be very formal interview whereas others can be an informal chat or group activity.
- **Auditions:** If you're applying to a performing arts course like Drama or Music, you'll almost certainly need to audition once the university has considered your application. The university will provide some guidance on your audition piece and key things you should demonstrate on the day.
- **Portfolios:** If you're applying to a creative arts course, like Art, Product Design, Architecture, Media or Photography, you'll probably need to compile a portfolio of your work, either from work you've completed in school or in your free time. The university will tell you whether you need to simply submit this online, deliver it in person or even present this to a tutor. If you do go to the university, there may also be an interview element, either one-on-one or in a group.

Although perhaps daunting, A Levels provide a stepping stone to the next stage of your life – be that at university or in a career. Do your research and plan carefully. Enjoyment and passion for your subjects are essential as you will perform better doing subjects you enjoy rather than those you have been forced to take! Remember – a lot of courses require UCAS tariff points without specific A Level requirements at all.

Choosing subjects you enjoy and are best at is a good, if obvious, piece of advice! Good Luck.



You may email the Sixth Form Team direct if you require more specific advice:

tmcmillan@tarporleyhigh.co.uk – Director of Sixth Form

shelsby@tarporleyhigh.co.uk – Pastoral Manager and Former Careers Adviser