

Greenshaw's response to A level reform



Schools and colleges face a challenging time over the next few years as they adapt to the new curriculum in England. Our staff are committed to ensuring that the most appropriate decision is made for any student that attends Greenshaw High School. This principle will continue to govern our decisions about course structures, with a commitment to ensuring that students from all backgrounds leave our school well-qualified at the end of the two year programme. Students at Greenshaw will continue to benefit from the education, guidance and support we provide.

A and AS level reform: the facts

Changes to the A level assessments have now devalued the AS qualification. Previously, the AS assessment contributed 50% towards the final A level. Taking an AS qualification in a reformed A level will no longer contribute to the final grade, so as a consequence all AS content would need to be retaken for the final awards. Unfortunately, not all subjects are being changed at the same time. Below is a list of the subjects and when they are due to be changed for Year 12 students.

September 2015: English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, art and design, economics, history, sociology

September 2016: French, geography, German, religious studies, drama, dance, music, physical education, Spanish, media studies

September 2017: Classics, further mathematics, mathematics, government and politics

Our rationale: A level structure at Greenshaw High School

Greenshaw High School has made the decision to offer only A level qualifications. This will mean that the majority of students will take three A level qualifications with a small number choosing to take four. Students will be given advice on an individual basis if taking four subjects is appropriate for them.

If students took AS examinations at the end of Year 12 approximately eight weeks of teaching would be lost: valuable time that would detract from the important final A level courses. At best, the work would need to be covered again or alternatively a complete topic or piece of coursework may have to be replaced to achieve the final A level. This would, in our opinion, prove counter-productive for our students.

Reasons to choose Greenshaw Sixth Form

- We have increased the number of hours allocated to each subject from nine to ten hours a fortnight, giving departments more time to teach their subject in greater depth.
- We ensure that students are on the most appropriate courses – there is a period of three to four weeks at the start of Year 12 where students can change their subject choices.
- We will continue to assess students regularly in each subject so that students know the grade they are likely to achieve at the end of the A level, supporting those students who are underachieving or at risk of not gaining the required grade.
- We have built in additional supervised study for each subject and timetabled assessment hours – these are used to support students and track their progress.
- We continue to balance study requirements with our enrichment, tutorial, mentoring and PE allocations on student timetables.

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

The EPQ is an AS level qualification. It encourages and enables students to explore a topic in depth and to develop academic skills that will provide a strong foundation to support the transition to university. Greenshaw will continue to offer the EPQ as a way of providing valuable evidence of a student's ability and potential. This is recognised by universities and employers alike.