

From the Deputy Head (Academic):
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Mill Hill School

Dear Parents

Lower Sixth Form Subject Options for September 2015

I am writing to ask you and your son or daughter to tell us which subjects he or she would like to study in the Lower Sixth Form. Last term you should have received a copy of our guide to life in the Mill Hill Sixth Form, which includes detailed information on the courses available together with practical advice on choosing an appropriate combination of subjects, the GCSE grades we require for entry to each Sixth Form course and how AS/A levels relate to particular undergraduate degrees. Should you not have this document at home, a copy can be collected from the Admissions Office; alternatively, it can be downloaded from the School website.

In the Lower Sixth the standard expectation is for pupils to take four subjects. In addition they have a weekly timetabled session of Personal, Social, Health and Religious Education. Suitably qualified pupils may be able to take an additional subject, where the timetable can be arranged to make this possible. The ablest mathematicians have additional periods of Mathematics each week to enable them to sit A level Further Mathematics in addition to A level Mathematics. For a small number of pupils, a programme of three, rather than, four subjects may be agreed as being appropriate; this is usually because it has not been possible to identify a fourth subject which they would like to take and for which they have met the academic entry requirements.

As parents and pupils know, the A level system is being reformed over the coming years, with the first new examination specifications being taught in some subjects from September 2015. For those starting the Lower Sixth Form in September 2015, therefore, a mixture of reformed and unreformed subjects is available. You will have seen from the individual subject entries in the guide which courses are being reformed from 2015 and which are retaining the examination specifications that have prevailed for the past few years. The pace of A level reform is nationally imposed: the School has no control over whether the reformed or unreformed specification is to be taught in any particular subject. It is also worth noting that certain aspects of the new specifications have yet to be ratified by the examinations regulator, Ofqual, so some details of our subject entries in the Sixth Form guide are necessarily tentative at this stage.

Until now, pupils in the Lower Sixth Form have followed their (usually) four AS courses, taking AS examinations towards the end of the academic year. The marks from those examinations are then 'banked' and subsequently added to the marks achieved at the end of the Upper Sixth when the pupils take their A2 examinations. This means that 50% of the final marks for a full A level come from the AS examinations and 50% from the A2 examinations. Pupils wishing to improve their AS marks are able to retake carefully selected AS examination units at the end of the Upper Sixth, with the better mark for any unit taken twice then being the one counted in the total. This examination system is known as 'modular'. From 2015, any unreformed subject will continue to be structured and assessed in this way.

However, subjects reforming from 2015 will be placed on what is known as a 'linear' examination system. This means that the entire subject content will be studied over the two Sixth Form years and all public examinations will take place at the end of the Upper Sixth. There will be no possibility of retaking particular units. Many parents will recognise this examination system as the one they experienced when they were Sixth Formers. Indeed, the basic structure represents a return to the way A levels were organised up until the introduction of Curriculum 2000 at the beginning of this century.

There are a number of different possible approaches to A level reform, and each school has to determine a way forward which most suits its own pupil body. At Mill Hill we have reflected very carefully on how best to accommodate the changes, understanding that a majority of pupils are likely to be taking a combination of reformed and unreformed subjects. There are upsides and downsides to both linear and modular formats, and we strongly recommend that pupils continue to choose their subjects on the grounds of interest and ability, rather than 'tactically' according to the differences in examination structure. Pupils will continue to take four subjects in the Lower Sixth Form. They will sit their AS examinations in any unreformed subjects and, also in the Summer term, a rigorous internal progress examination in any reformed subjects.

In most cases, pupils continue with three of their subjects in the Upper Sixth, to complete full A levels in those subjects. Three A levels are the norm in independent schools and are what universities expect to base their conditional offers on. Further Mathematicians tend to complete four full A levels and, again, universities will often expect this to be the case. By the time most pupils have completed their Upper Sixth year, therefore, they will normally have qualifications in three subjects at A level and one subject at AS level (unreformed subjects only). Pupils are not asked to decide which three of their four Lower Sixth courses they wish to study in the Upper Sixth Form until they have completed two terms of the work. This ensures that each pupil makes a properly informed choice as to which subjects are most appropriate to carry forward. The minimum requirement to continue in the Upper Sixth is a minimum E grade in that subject in the AS examination or equivalent in the School's internal progress examination for a reformed subject.

With this letter, I am including a subject options form which should be completed in conjunction with our Sixth Form guide. Other sources of information which may aid your thinking include the results of the Morrisby careers aptitude test and interview and a helpful document entitled Informed Choices which is published by the Russell Group of leading universities. This can be found by searching on the internet for 'Russell Group Informed Choices' and careful reading is recommended for those who may, in due course, wish to apply to some of the more competitive universities.

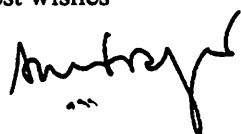
Naturally the School is very happy to offer personal advice and guidance to you and your son or daughter with regard to subject choices. They may wish to speak to the Head of Department of any subject being considered, if this has not already happened, and their Housemaster or Housemistress will be well placed to provide you with an overview. However, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can also be of help.

Please note that it is not necessary to have a GCSE in the following subjects in order to study them to AS/A level, although individual discussion with the relevant Head of Department is strongly recommended prior to a choice being made: Art & Design; Business Studies; Classical Civilisation; Drama; Economics; Government & Politics; ICT; PE; Religious Studies.

Once the options form has been submitted, changes to the subjects requested cannot normally be made until GCSE results are published in August. Such requests will be accepted but cannot be guaranteed. For this reason, it is essential that the subject choice is considered very carefully now, in case we cannot later accommodate a change of direction.

I should be very grateful if your son or daughter returned the options form correctly completed to their Housemaster or Housemistress on or before Friday 6 February, which will give time for a final choice to be made in the light of your discussions at parents' evening on Thursday 29 January.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony', written in a cursive style.

Name House.....

MILL HILL SCHOOL

Lower Sixth Form Options for September 2015

This form must be returned to the Housemaster/Housemistress by
Friday 6 February

BLOCK A	BLOCK B	BLOCK C	BLOCK D
Business Studies Design Technology Economics Government & Politics History ICT Mathematics Maths + Further Maths <i>(count as one subject)</i> Music Physics	Biology Business Studies Chemistry Drama English French Geography Government & Politics History Physics Religious Studies	Art & Design Biology Business Studies Chemistry Classical Civilisation Drama Economics Geography German Mathematics PE Spanish	Art & Design Business Studies Chemistry Economics English French History ICT Latin Physics

Please select ONE subject from each block:

A	B	C	D
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If your preferred subject combination does not fit these blocks, please write the *closest* combination which fits the blocks on this form and attach a letter stating your *preferred* combination. When all forms are in, we will do our best to accommodate any additional combinations, though we cannot guarantee to be able to do so.

Mathematics plus Further Mathematics count as *one subject option*. Pupils taking this course should complete, by the end of the Upper Sixth, one A level in Mathematics and one A level in Further Mathematics. This course should be taken only with the agreement of the Head of Mathematics and suitability is subject to on-going review once the course has started.

Pupils who select **Economics** as one of their preferred courses will be asked to take a short aptitude test in Economics, to help assess their suitability for this course. This is in addition to the minimum academic entry requirement for Economics of an A grade in GCSE Mathematics and a B grade in GCSE English Language. Those who perform poorly in the aptitude test will be given guidance to find an alternative subject.

Should the number of pupils requesting a particular subject, or an option within a subject, fall below that deemed appropriate by the Headmaster, that subject will be suspended for the year and alternatives offered.

Once this form has been submitted, requests to change options can be considered only after GCSE results are published. Such requests will be accepted but cannot be guaranteed.

Signed by Pupil..... Date.....

Countersigned by Parent/Guardian..... Date.....

Countersigned by Housemaster/mistress..... Date.....