



SIXTH FORM COURSES 2012

WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

# *Entry procedure and course information*

## *Sixth Form courses 2012*

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# Welcome

## DEAR PARENTS

Thank you for requesting a copy of this brochure. I hope that you will find it informative and that you will go ahead with an application to Westminster School.

The co-educational Sixth Form at Westminster offers an exciting, stimulating and challenging environment for learning. The School is one of the foremost centres of academic excellence in the country – a reputation due not only to its pupils' unrivalled examination results and admission to the top universities worldwide but, even more importantly, because of their enjoyment of academic enquiry, debate and search for explanation well beyond the published syllabus.

In addition, pupils enhance both their intellectual and social development by taking full advantage of the many opportunities that are offered in sport, music, drama, debating, community service and other forms of civic engagement. Historically Westminster is a boarding school and approximately one third of Sixth Form pupils, girls and boys, are boarders. Some boarders come from far away but most are Londoners who prefer to avoid the daily grind of commuting. For day pupils also Westminster is very different from a conventional school. Many remain long after the teaching day has finished, perhaps to work in the library, or for extra sport, to rehearse for a play or concert, or to attend a lecture.

We are sometimes asked if we are considering the International Baccalaureate. The answer is that we prefer A-levels and the Cambridge Pre-University (Pre-U) syllabuses, since both allow the specialisation on which Westminster pupils thrive. Most pupils here study for four subjects, which provide both breadth and depth for the two years of the Sixth Form; while the principle of choice fits well with Westminster's tradition of nurturing individual talents and interests. We also find that the sheer intellectual enjoyment that this individual approach brings, ensures that pupils go on to win places at excellent universities. Those academic departments, as you will read in this brochure, that follow the Pre-U specifications do so because they are more stimulating than the equivalent A-level syllabuses and therefore allow Westminster pupils to realise their potential more effectively.

In 2010 the Pre-U was examined for the first time and the A\* grade was introduced for A-levels. We were delighted that 51.3% of grades achieved by Westminster pupils were A\* or the equivalent Pre-U grades (D1 and D2). It was also very gratifying when we learnt that Westminster was top of the Financial Times schools' league table for the fifth consecutive year. Consistency of excellence based on inspiring teaching is our hallmark.

Once you have read this brochure and explored the website ([www.westminster.org.uk](http://www.westminster.org.uk)), it is always best to have a glimpse at first hand of what lies ahead, so I strongly encourage you to come to one of our Open Days before the formal process of interviews and tests gets under way. I shall look forward to meeting you, showing you the School and introducing you to the Heads of the Academic Departments who will answer any questions you might have.

I know that the application procedure for a change of school can sometimes seem a stressful experience for pupils (and, often, their parents), but I hope that, in applying for Westminster, excitement will outweigh anxiety! In giving and gaining as much information as possible at this stage, I am sure that the choices which are eventually made will be the right ones. One thing I can say is that new pupils who join us in the Sixth Form settle in very quickly and happily and make a great success of their time here.

DR M S SPURR  
Head Master

June 2011

# Life at Westminster

## LOCATION

Situated between Parliament and Westminster Abbey, the School's inspirational location has always been of significant influence. Politics has been an abiding interest among the pupil body and the importance of spiritual and moral reflection is also deeply embedded. Dean's Yard is cloistered and calm, but, minutes away, is the best of everything metropolitan: museums, galleries, concert halls, theatres and the energy of a great city – all of which is accessed in order to enrich the curricular and extra-curricular programme.

## A 'HALFWAY-HOUSE' BETWEEN SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

The Westminster Sixth Form is often regarded as a 'halfway-house' between School and University. As such it aims to provide a safe, stable and enriching community in which its pupils are encouraged to learn about the world around them in order actively to engage with it and lead a fulfilling life beyond Westminster. With an enviable speaker programme and an ever-increasing range of academic, artistic, sporting and cultural expeditions, Westminster's global dimension provides pupils with every opportunity to develop their cultural intelligence. Alongside this, the School coordinates a popular and thriving volunteering programme, which encourages Sixth Form pupils to engage with the local community in a regular and meaningful way.

## BOARDING AND DAY PUPILS

The Westminster Sixth Form is unique in London as the only co-educational Sixth Form with day and boarding pupils. While academic and cultural attainments are highly prized, the Westminster tradition is fully committed to the nurture of each pupil's personal development. The boarding school ethos and structure have been central to the fulfilment of a Westminster education since the School's foundation. Although only one quarter of Westminster pupils board, the School is still run along boarding lines and based around a house system, with the house becoming a 'home away from home' for day and boarding pupils alike. The longer day and week enables the provision of the overall curriculum and in particular ensures depth of pastoral care and breadth of opportunity.

There are three boys' boarding houses, two mixed boarding houses with girls-only floors, one girls' boarding house and five day houses. For those who board, Westminster allows for a regular home-life with the large majority returning home on Saturday afternoons leaving just a few in School at weekends.

Cooperation accompanies competition at Westminster and the School aims to show by its own success that high-achieving individuals working together in a climate of mutual respect create something much greater than the sum of their individual achievements. In addition to teachers, Housemasters and personal Tutors play an important role in the rich, relational experience that Westminster offers.

## GIRLS AT WESTMINSTER

Girls are an integral part of the intellectual and cultural vitality that creates such a stimulating Sixth Form experience at Westminster. Since 1973, girls have made their mark at Westminster and former pupils include Imogen Stubbs, Helena Bonham-Carter, Ruth Kelly, Dido Armstrong and Martha Lane-Fox. From the moment they arrive at Westminster, girls enjoy a comprehensive induction programme coordinated by the Head of Girls and New Boys, Miss Sarah Leonard, and become part of the diverse social fabric which makes the School such an exciting place to live and learn. Representing one third of the Sixth Form (2010: 132 girls and 252 boys), girls enjoy the academic challenge and debate in the classroom, an extraordinary breadth of extra-curricular activities and a large number of voluntary and leadership opportunities within the School and wider community.



# The Sixth Form curriculum

Sixth Form admission to Westminster is by competitive examination and interview in November the year before entry. Candidates select the four subjects in which they are to be examined based on their likely choice of courses for study.

There is a great deal of flexibility in the way in which pupils may approach their choice of courses at Sixth Form level, and that may make the choice quite a difficult one for many. It is for this reason that the choice we are asking you to make now is a **provisional** one. Pupils will be allowed to change their choices, though further assessment in the new subject intended for study may be required before permission is given to change. However, you will understand that the school does need to plan ahead and that, for us, getting an idea of provisional numbers for each subject is important.

The programme for Sixth Form study is complex; in particular some subjects teach the Pre-U rather than A-level. The Pre-U syllabuses are an alternative to A-levels which have been developed by Cambridge International Examinations; further details may be found at [www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/uppersec/preu](http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/uppersec/preu)

Nationally the norm is for most Sixth Formers to study four subjects in their first Sixth Form year (Year 12) and drop to three in their second year (Year 13), ending up therefore with one AS-level and three A-levels. At Westminster, this is the minimum that we will allow pupils to do. Most pupils will want to do four subjects for both years and end up with four full A-levels or Pre-U's, although some may take five.

It is important to note that if a pupil elects to do a subject which is not examined at the end of Year 12 (i.e. Modern and Classical Languages, Art, Art History and English Literature, all of which offer Pre-U), the commitment from the outset is for a full two-year course. These subjects are marked below in heavy type. For the moment we need to know the four subjects which pupils **think** they wish to study, and in which they wish to be tested at the entrance examination.

The Sixth Form subjects are arranged in four blocks. Some subjects appear in more than one block to give a wider choice of subject combinations. Pupils choose one subject from each block.

BLOCK 1	BLOCK 2	BLOCK 3	BLOCK 4	AS LEVEL ONLY
<b>Art History</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Art History</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>
Drama and Theatre Studies	Biology	Biology	Chemistry	Electronics
Economics	Chemistry	Economics	Economics	Music
<b>English Literature</b>	Economics	<b>English Literature</b>	<b>English Literature</b>	
History	<b>English Literature</b>	<b>French</b>	Geography	
Mathematics	<b>French</b>	Geography	<b>German</b>	
*Mathematics with Further Mathematics	History	History	<b>Greek</b>	
Religious Studies	<b>Latin</b>	*Mathematics with Further Mathematics	History	
	Music	Religious Studies	Physics	
	Physics		Religious Studies	
			<b>Russian</b>	
			<b>Spanish</b>	

\*When choosing Mathematics with Further Mathematics from Block 1, you must also choose Mathematics with Further Mathematics from Block 3. The choice will count as two A-levels.

# Before you decide

## PLEASE READ THESE NOTES CAREFULLY

1) The Westminster blocking system in the Sixth Form is predicated upon 4 A-level/ Pre-U courses; the only combination of 5 full academic A-levels allowed is Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology (for intending medics who are also *exceptionally* able mathematicians).

At this stage, we are asking you to choose your four entrance examination subjects and you must choose one subject from each block.

In certain circumstances, however, a 5th examinable subject may be pursued during Options (see page 8): certain languages which are not offered in the main blocks; some creative subjects for those who wish to extend their practical or aesthetic skills (Music, Electronics); and Critical Thinking (which cannot be pursued beyond AS).

2) The subjects in each of Blocks 1 to 4 offer two-year courses leading to full A-level or Pre-U.

3) Currently Art, Art History, English Literature, French, German, Greek, Latin, Russian and Spanish only offer two-year courses leading to Pre-U. All other subjects offer one-year courses leading to AS, followed by a second year course leading to A2.

4) Mathematics with Further Mathematics leads to two A-levels and uses the time allocation of Blocks 1 and 3; it counts as two choices. Those studying this subject must take two additional specialist subjects (which may not include Art or Drama and Theatre Studies).

5) Some pupils may wish to study an additional AS from the list in the 5th column, but no decision needs to be made about this, apart from Music, until a candidate has been offered a place.

6) It is also possible to study Art outside the blocking system, though this will not necessarily lead to a qualification.

7) Whilst we will do our utmost to accommodate any combination of subjects, no particular combination can be guaranteed other than those listed in the blocking system above.

It is important that the choice of subjects is related as far as possible to university and career plans. Further guidance on subject combinations is contained in *Choosing your Sixth Form subjects* (page 16) and thinking ahead to university and in the subject information of this brochure (please see Course information contents on page 19).

Further information or advice may be obtained from the Director of Studies, Mr Rodney Harris, who can be contacted at: **rodney.harris@westminster.org.uk**



# Beyond the subject choices

We aim to ensure that you will find the Sixth Form at Westminster an exciting but also challenging place. For this reason, the School offers a wide variety of extracurricular Options and activities which form an integral part of every pupil's programme in the Sixth Form.

## *Within the timetable*

### CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

This is a special kind of Option each week for all members of Year 12. The programme is designed to introduce comparisons of the ways in which cultures differ, either now or in the past. How is it possible that they did things like that when now it seems unacceptable? Why are some behaviours now seen as normal but in the past were thought to be unacceptable? The idea is to reduce the sense of self-evidence that one tends to have of one's own way of doing things and to give pupils a greater global perspective.

### OPTIONS

Each member of staff offers an Option in a subject in which they have a special interest. Most pupils take a total of six of these in Year 12 of the Sixth Form. Each course lasts a total of eight single periods. A feature of the Options Programme is the variety of choice on offer. Current subjects include: Chinese, An Introduction to Social and Political Sciences, and Law. However, not all Options are academic: Cultural London, the French New Wave Cinema, and the History of Popular Music are typical choices.

The courses do not usually lead to examinations, but it is hoped that the interest evoked in each will add to a pupil's own intellectual and personal development. Some courses – such as Law and Philosophy – will be a vital prerequisite for those who hope to study these subjects at university. The Options periods also allow pupils who wish to pursue other languages or a small number of additional AS courses (Electronics, Music and Critical Thinking).

### THE JOHN LOCKE SOCIETY

We have a timetabled lesson each week where the entire Sixth Form is free to attend a talk from a visiting speaker. This takes place each Wednesday at midday. Speakers come from a wide range of backgrounds: politics and the media of course; but this is also a chance to hear academics from subject disciplines that are not available at A-level.

We have had visits from leading academics in the areas of anthropology, social theory, psychoanalysis and, perhaps most memorably, on body language. Recent guests have included George Galloway, Prof. Steve Jones, the artist Anthony Murphy, and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. The talks are always followed by a question and answer session, and there is an opportunity for a small group of pupils each week to have lunch with the speaker. The Society is run by pupils: there is a John Locke Committee which instigates many of the invitations to speakers.



## Extracurricular

### STATION

Station, the Westminster term for sport, takes place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons as well as some Saturdays for matches and competitions. We offer over 20 sports with the unusual feature that pupils have a free choice of what they wish to do. No particular sport is compulsory in any given term although once choices have been made in the first term these should be carried through for at least the first two terms.

Pupils who are involved in major competitive sports such as Water (rowing), Football or Netball will participate on both afternoons. Others might choose one sport for Tuesday with a different one on Thursday. We also offer Fencing, Fives, Hockey, Swimming, Tennis and also less traditional pursuits such as Body-Step, Gym Fitness, Girls' Football, Rock-Climbing and Shooting among numerous others. Many of these sports are coached by professional coaches.

In addition there is a Community Service option as well as the possibility of Music or Theatre (both by special arrangement). We encourage all pupils to be ambitious in their sporting activity. Many will represent the School in fixtures with other schools as well as competing very successfully in National and International events. There are training and competition tours in some years, Football perhaps to France and Cricket to Barbados, with rowers going to Ghent or Princeton Regattas and to Venice to a rowing competition on the Grand Canal.

### EXPEDITIONS

Westminster has an extensive Expeditions programme which offers both cultural and leisure trips at home and abroad. Linguists are well catered for by visits to Spain, Germany, Russia and Chile. In the past year Art Historians have visited Barcelona, Paris, New York, Venice and Chicago; skiing trips have been to Vermont and the French Alps; rock-climbers have been to Norway, Corsica and Skye. Each October a group of pupils enjoys the Lyke Wake Walk, covering the 40 or so miles across the width of the North Yorkshire Moors in under 24 hours – one reward being a dawn breakfast at Rosedale in the centre of the Moor. Those pupils who go gliding in Yorkshire might be able to see it from a higher perspective. Last year the School as a whole mounted over 60 expeditions with some 1,400 individual journeys made.

### SOCIETIES

A wide variety of activity groups exist in which you can take part. Particularly thriving at the moment are the various Environmental Groups (awareness, recycling, reducing carbon footprint), the Political Society (which meets weekly to debate Current Affairs) and the Business Society (which has a programme of visits from very high powered Business Leaders). There are also Philosophy, English and Biology societies that meet regularly, sometimes with invited speakers. The School also runs a thriving Young Enterprise programme. Debating has never been stronger at Westminster, with many opportunities both in House Debating and prestigious Inter-School competitions.

### DRAMA

The Drama Department at Westminster is very active, and there will be numerous opportunities for you to get involved if you want to, either on-stage or backstage. Most years we mount a large-scale musical or opera in conjunction with the Music Department; there are also, typically, Shakespeare plays, small cast productions and House Plays throughout the year.



## MUSIC

A large number of Sixth Form pupils involve themselves in the wide range of choirs and instrumental ensembles on offer at the School. The Choir performs in Westminster Abbey twice a week and gives various concerts throughout the year. The long list of instrumental ensembles includes the School's Symphony Orchestra which performs regularly at venues such as St John's Smith Square. In recent years, the orchestra toured Italy and the choir toured the Netherlands. Rock and jazz musicians enjoy the use of the department's well equipped rock rehearsal studio and state of the art recording studio.

## WESTMINSTER IN THE COMMUNITY

Westminster in the Community refers to our developing programme of civic engagement, which is being viewed, increasingly, as an important educational component of good citizenship. Through a series of well-conceived projects and volunteering opportunities and working with a wide range of local organisations, and some further afield, Westminster wants to encourage its pupils to look outwards beyond the immediate priorities of academic and extracurricular success, creating an expectation that every pupil, during their time at the School, will have engaged in at least one educationally beneficial project. This year, 200 of our pupils have been involved in volunteering activities, mostly on a regular basis.

Each July, shortly after the end of term, some 30 Sixth Form pupils live and work in the precincts for one week with a similar number of physically and mentally disadvantaged young men and women. This PHAB course has been running continually at Westminster for over 30 years.

Sixth Form pupils are particularly prominent in the School's Charities Committee, which oversees a range of fund-raising activities during the course of each School year.

These range from charitable events involving the whole year group to specific projects organised by a group of friends. The emphasis is not only on raising money for good causes but to provide pupils with the experience of helping others in the local community – for example, organising hampers for the local elderly each Christmas.



# The admissions procedure

There is a huge amount of information in this brochure and you might decide not to read everything. It is however very important to read this section carefully and also the two sections that follow: Guide to Making an Application and Frequently Asked Questions. If, having read these sections, you are still confused about the admissions procedure please telephone our Admissions Office on 020 7963 1003 or email [sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk](mailto:sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk). If you are applying from overseas it is essential that you read the section entitled: *Information for Overseas Candidates*.

## OPEN DAYS

The best way to learn about entry to Westminster School at 16+ is to come to one of the Open Days. These take place on **Saturday 25 June 2011** and **Monday 5 September 2011**.

### OPEN DAY TIMETABLES

#### Saturday 25 June 2011

**10.30am**

Refreshments

**11.00am**

Introductory Talks from the Head Master and other senior members of staff.

**11.40am**

Tours of the School led by Year 12 pupils and the opportunity to talk with subject specialists, the Head Master and other senior members of staff.

#### Monday 5 September 2011

**4.00pm**

Refreshments

**5.00pm**

Introductory Talks from the Head Master and other senior members of staff.

**5.40pm**

Tours of the School led by Year 12 pupils and the opportunity to talk with subject specialists, the Head Master and other senior members of staff.

When you arrive please make your way to Church House. The entrance is on the south side of Dean's Yard. The entrance to Dean's Yard is next to the main entrance to Westminster Abbey. The closest Underground stations are St James's Park and Westminster. There are parking restrictions until 6.30pm and the Congestion Charge operates until 6pm Monday to Friday. There is no Congestion Charge at weekends and parking restrictions may vary.

There is an underground car park in Abingdon Street opposite the House of Lords open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

If you are planning to come to one of the Open Days it is essential to let us know in advance. To register to attend please visit our website [www.westminster.org.uk](http://www.westminster.org.uk)

Once we have received and processed your registration we will post your ticket to you. You will need to bring this with you to the Open Day.

## REGISTRATION

Registration opens on **Monday 13 June 2011**. Candidates and their parents register online. Please go to [www.westminster.org.uk](http://www.westminster.org.uk) and follow the link labelled *Apply Online for Sixth Form Entry*.

Follow the instructions step by step but before you go online to register please read the section entitled *Guide to Making an Application* (page 13). If you experience a problem, or if you do not have access to the internet, please telephone 020 7963 1003 or email [sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk](mailto:sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk)

The closing date for registration is **Wednesday 12 October 2011**.

## CANDIDATE AGE

Westminster is a school for pupils under the age of 19. The date of birth of a candidate applying for admission in 2012 must be between 1 September 1995 and 31 August 1996.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

The examinations will be held on **Saturday 5 November 2011** for all candidates. They will take place between 9.00am and 3.30pm in Westminster.

Candidates choose the four subjects in which they will be examined. Each examination lasts an hour. There is information about the examination requirements for each subject in the *Course Information Section* (page 19).

## INTERVIEWS

Those candidates who have performed most strongly in the examinations will be invited to come to Westminster School for interviews. Candidates who are not being invited for interviews will be notified in writing at the same time. The interview day will be **Saturday 26 November 2011** and all candidates who have been invited, including those from overseas, must come for interview on that day. Candidates will have interviews in each of their four examination subjects and they will also have a general interview.

## SCHOOL REFERENCES

Should you be invited to interview, following the entrance examinations, we will write to the head teacher of your present school for a reference. No exceptions will be allowed.

## OFFERS

Offers of places will be sent out to arrive on **Wednesday 7 December 2011** and the deadline for acceptance will be **Tuesday 13 December 2011**. Some candidates will be placed on a waiting list. These candidates will be informed if they are going to be offered a place as soon as possible after 13 December 2011.

## ENTRANCE FEE

Parents accepting the offer of a place must pay the non-refundable Entrance Fee of £883.00. Please note that this fee is not offset against the final term's fees.

## GCSE/IGCSE REQUIREMENT

The offer of a place is conditional on a candidate achieving the required number of GCSE/IGCSE passes at the appropriate grades. The GCSE/IGCSE requirement is a minimum of 6 passes at A grade, with A grades preferably in the subjects to be studied at A-level/Pre-U. Overseas candidates and those requiring a visa to study in the UK should refer to the section entitled: *Information for Overseas Candidates* (page 15).

## FEES

The fees for the academic year 2010/2011 are £9,802.00 per term for Sixth Form boarding entry and £7,360.00 per term for Sixth Form day pupil entry. These fees will increase before September 2011 and are therefore subject to review. Fees are reviewed annually.

## SIXTH FORM BURSARIES

A number of means tested bursaries (up to 100% of the day fees) are offered each year. We aim to act as sensitively as possible and very few members of staff and none of the other pupils will be aware that a boy or girl is receiving financial assistance. When a full bursary is awarded it will cover the cost of uniform, equipment and compulsory School expeditions.

Candidates who wish to apply for a bursary should ask their parents to complete the *Bursary Part A Initial Assessment Form* which is available as part of the online registration process. Depending on the family's

financial circumstances the Bursar may decide to exempt a candidate from payment of the Registration Fee. For assistance, please contact the Admissions Secretary on 020 7963 1003 or email [sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk](mailto:sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk). If a candidate who is applying for a bursary is called back for interview, his or her parents will be invited to meet the Bursar, Mr Christopher Silcock, on the interview day – 26 November 2011.

**There are no Sixth Form scholarships. Bursaries are awarded only to candidates whose parents are UK residents and would not be able to afford the full fees.**

To be eligible for a bursary, a candidate's parents must belong to one of the following categories:

- British citizens.
- Certain British subjects with right of abode in the UK.
- Certain Commonwealth citizens with the right of abode in the UK.

The above can be determined by possession of a UK passport or a certificate of entitlement to right of abode in the UK issued by the UK Government or its agents abroad.

- Citizens of the EEA/Switzerland who have a right of abode in the UK.

The above can be confirmed by possession of an EEA/Swiss passport or ID with a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the UK that has been issued by the UK Government or on its behalf.

For more information about eligibility for bursaries please refer to <http://www.westminster.org.uk/assets/GUIDE-Eligibility-for-Bursaries.pdf>

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

During the Lent (Spring) Term successful candidates are invited to spend a day at the School. By this time they will have been allocated to houses so the day will be an opportunity to get to know the other boys and girls going into the same house and also to meet existing pupils. They will also meet their Housemasters for the first time. Members of staff, led by the Director of Studies, Head of Girls and New Boys and the Housemasters, will be available to discuss changes to A-level plans, although we expect any such changes to be kept to a minimum.

## GUIDE TO MAKING AN APPLICATION

Candidates and their parents register online. Please go to [www.westminster.org.uk](http://www.westminster.org.uk) and follow the link labelled *Apply Online for Sixth Form Entry*.

Follow the instructions step by step. If you experience a problem, please telephone 020 7963 1003 or email [sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk](mailto:sixthformadmissions@westminster.org.uk). Registration opens on Monday 13 June 2011.

Before you go online to register please read the following information:

- The candidate's date of birth must be between 1 September 1995 and 31 August 1996.
- Candidates from overseas should read carefully the section of this booklet entitled *Information for Overseas Candidates* (page 15)
- Decide whether you are applying for a day place or a boarding place. Girls applying for a boarding place may indicate if they wish to be in the girls-only house.

- If a boarder will not be able to return home over half-term holiday and 'Exeat Weekends' or when he or she is unwell, we must have the name and address of the UK guardian with whom he or she will stay. If we are not satisfied with the arrangements for a guardian we will not accept the application.
- Parents will be asked to pay the registration fee of £140.00 using a credit card or debit card.
- If you attend a school in the UK, you will be asked to list the GCSE/IGCSEs that have already been taken or which you will be taking in the summer of 2012. We will ask your present school to give us your predicted grades in these examinations.
- We ask candidates to write a personal statement online. This is an opportunity for you to tell us more about yourself. We would like to know:
  - Your main interests, both in and out of school.
  - Your reasons for applying to Westminster School.

Please provide any other information that you think might be relevant. You might, for example, have attended several different schools or lived abroad for a time. You might speak a language other than English at home.

- We want to see the candidate's most recent school report, so please have this ready.
- You will be asked to choose the four subjects in which you will be examined on 5 November 2011. These will also be the four subjects that you are thinking of taking for A-level. There is information about the examination requirements for each subject in the *Course Information Section* (page 19). Please read this information before you make your subject choices.
- If you want to be examined in Mathematics with Further Mathematics you must select it in Block 1 and Block 3. Mathematics with Further Mathematics are two A-levels but there is only one entrance examination.
- Candidates choosing Mathematics with Further Mathematics should not also choose Art or Music as entrance examination subjects.



## Frequently asked questions

**Q. If I can't make the Open Day, how else can I visit the School?**

**A.** Telephone the Admissions Department on 020 7963 1003 to arrange to join one of the regular tours of the School. You should be aware, however, that the other families on the tour will probably be interested in 13+ entry and you will not have the opportunity to speak to subject teachers. These tours also become booked up weeks in advance so do come to an Open Day if you can!

**Q. How do you set exam papers when only one year of the GCSE/IGCSE syllabus has been covered?**

**A.** Be assured that we do take this into account when we set the papers. For information about specific examinations please refer to the *Course Information Section* (page 19).

**Q. I haven't studied the subject before, how will I cope with the exam?**

**A.** The exams in Art History and Economics are based on the assumption that candidates will not have studied these subjects before. They are not offered at GCSE/IGCSE level at Westminster, so all Westminster pupils moving up from Year 11 will be starting from scratch. There is also a Russian examination for those who have never studied the language.

**Q. Why am I sitting only one exam for my Maths?**

**A.** If you have chosen Mathematics with Further Mathematics in Blocks 1 and 3 you will only have one Maths entrance examination, although Mathematics with Further Mathematics count as two A-levels.

**Q. Are past papers available?**

**A.** No, but look carefully at the information about the examinations by referring to the *Course Information Section* (page 19).

**Q. What if the A-levels/Pre-Us I want to take don't fit into your four teaching blocks?**

**A.** Read the notes on the *Sixth Form curriculum* (page 6). If your question is not answered there please email the Director of Studies: [rodney.harris@westminster.org.uk](mailto:rodney.harris@westminster.org.uk). The subjects appear as they do in the blocks because these are the subject combinations that suit most Westminster pupils, and most Westminster pupils go to their first choice universities to read the subjects they are most interested in.

**Q. What happens if I change my mind after selecting the A-levels/Pre-Us I want to study?**

**A.** We expect pupils to study their entrance examination subjects when they arrive at Westminster. Pupils who wish to make changes to their choices should discuss this with the Director of Studies

**Q. How many applications are made and places are offered?**

**A.** We usually have about 400 applicants. We interview approximately 120 candidates and we offer between 65 and 75 places, with a waiting list.

**Q. How many girls apply compared with boys?**

**A.** The great majority of candidates are girls but we have a significant number of boy applicants. Applications from girls and boys are treated in exactly the same way.

**Q. Is it easier to gain entry by selecting one or the other: boarder or day?**

**A.** No. Selection is based upon academic criteria.

**Q. Can I study more than four A-levels/Pre-Us?**

**A.** In general the answer is no, but there are a few exceptions. For more information please refer to *Before You Decide Section* (page 7). Studying for more than four A-levels/Pre-Us does not give any advantage in university applications and may result in lower grades across the board.



# Information for overseas candidates

All candidates whose parents do not live in the UK should read this section carefully before proceeding with an application.

## CANDIDATE AGE

The date of birth of candidates applying for admission in 2012 must be between 1 September 1995 and 31 August 1996. The School reserves the right to demand proof of a candidate's date of birth.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Candidates are expected to demonstrate fluency in both written and spoken English. Lessons at Westminster move at a fast pace and a pupil who did not speak good English would not cope. **Candidates are not allowed the use of dictionaries during the entrance examinations.**

## GCSE/IGCSE QUALIFICATION

There is no GCSE/IGCSE requirement for overseas students who attend schools that do not prepare pupils for GCSE/IGCSE examinations.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

Overseas candidates may sit the Entrance Examinations in their country of residence.

- It is the responsibility of the candidate to make arrangements for the examinations to be supervised in an appropriate way either at the candidate's school or by an external organisation such as the British Council. Westminster School must be satisfied in advance with the security of the supervision arrangements.
- The examinations must be taken on the designated Examination Day which is **5 November 2011**. If this is not possible permission must be obtained from Westminster School for the examinations to be taken on either 4 November or 6 November. The examinations cannot be taken before or after those dates.
- Candidates offering Music or Art as one of their four subjects must sit their entrance examinations in the UK.
- Any cost incurred in the sending out and return of the examination papers must be borne by the candidate. Wherever possible the preference of Westminster School is for examination papers to be sent out by electronic mail to a secure address. Completed examination scripts should be scanned and mailed electronically, or faxed, but hard copies of the scripts must be sent to us by **9 November 2011**.
- If a candidate is invited for interview he or she must come to Westminster School on the designated Interview Day which is 26 November 2011. No exceptions can be made.

## GUARDIANS

All pupils at Westminster School whose parents live abroad must have a guardian.

What is the role of the guardian?

- The guardian must take the place of a pupil's parent during term time in a very real sense.
- He or she must be available at all times to discuss with members of staff any problems that may have arisen.
- In the event of illness or suspension from School the guardian must take the pupil into his or her home.
- Westminster School is closed over half-term holidays and for two 'Exeat Weekends' each term. At these times a pupil may not stay at School and must go to his or her guardian.

**Candidates who are resident overseas must provide the name and address of the proposed guardian and state their relationship to the guardian. An application will not be accepted if the name and address of a guardian have not been provided or if, in the opinion of Westminster School, guardianship arrangements are unsatisfactory.**

## VISAS

The UK Border Agency now operates a Points Based visa system. Westminster School is authorised by the UK Border Agency to issue candidates who have been offered places at the School with Certificates of Acceptance to Study (CAS). Please look at the UK Border Agency website to find out how you can apply to come to or remain in the UK as a child student under Tier 4 (Child) of the points-based system and other related information: [www.ukba.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/)

# Choosing your Sixth Form subjects

It goes without saying, of course, that this is an important decision, and one which deserves careful thought. Talk to as many people as possible (parents, teachers, friends), but remember that ultimately this is up to you, and it is a decision best made according to the reasons which you find most compelling. It might be helpful, however, to bear the following in mind:

- First and foremost, choose a subject that you find stimulating, and try to avoid the 'means-to-an-end' mentality; if the means are not attractive then there is a large chance that the end will turn out to be less appealing than perhaps it seems at the moment.
- Find out as clearly as possible what the A-level or Pre-U course involves, and make sure you are aware not just of its content, but also the methods by which you will be working (e.g. number of essays, quantity of coursework, number of practicals, amount of factual learning and so on). Moreover, do not assume that the course will necessarily be very similar to GCSE; try to find out exactly what will be involved.
- Although it is true that your Sixth Form subjects should be subjects in which you are aiming for A/A\* grades at GCSE, do not choose a subject simply on the basis that you are good at it now; to be in the running for the top grades at AS and A2 or Pre-U you must be willing to work very hard, so make sure the subject is one with which you engage.
- Aim for a group of subjects which mainly complement and reinforce each other, but which include sufficient breadth to keep your options open. To this end, it is important to be aware of the requirements that different degree courses may have.
- Westminster offers two new subjects in the Sixth Form: Economics and Art History. These have proved to be very popular choices, and subjects which lead well to a wide range of other degree courses; for more information see the subject details.

## UNIVERSITY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There is a very large and exciting range of courses on offer (many of which go far beyond the subjects offered at School level). This range means that you must not assume that the course requirements are the same across all the universities.

What follows is a very general guide; do not assume that it will apply in every single instance, and if you think you are interested in a particular course at a particular university, the best thing to do is to go directly to their admissions guide to see precisely what they are looking for. In addition, the Westminster Heads of Departments will be able to advise you further: it is always worth emailing them to ask them for an informal meeting to discuss your personal circumstances and suitability to read their subject.

**N.B.** For some courses the corresponding A-level or Pre-U is not necessarily required; it would, however, be very unusual in most cases not to choose to do the A-level if at this stage you already know it is likely to be the focus of your degree course. Bear in mind too that for university admission interviews you will have to convince an academic that you have a genuine interest in their subject.



## ARCHITECTURE

Most leading schools of Architecture require a strong folio of drawings (which in practice means that Art in the Sixth Form/Remove is necessary). Maths A-level can be helpful too.

## ART HISTORY

Although Art History A-level is rarely an absolute requirement, candidates who have taken it tend to fare much better in their university application than those who have not.

## CLASSICS, ORIENTAL STUDIES ETC.

For language-based Classics courses, the Pre-U in Latin and/or Greek is usually required, and where not absolutely required will obviously still be a significant advantage. For Oriental, African and Near Eastern Studies an unspecified modern or classical language is often required or recommended. Evidence of linguistic ability will in all cases be needed.

## ECONOMICS

A-level Economics is desirable. Although you categorically do not need Maths to study Economics at A-level, studying it at university level is another matter. To gain a place on a pure Economics course or one where Economics is a component, and to cope with it and enjoy it when there, the more Maths the better. Accordingly, Further Maths is even more advantageous, especially for the most competitive course.

The Critical Thinking entry in this brochure describes the possible usefulness of taking Critical Thinking to AS-level as a preparation for the Thinking Skills Assessment test (TSA) that is required by all Oxford colleges if applying in Economics & Management and some Cambridge colleges if applying in Economics or Land Economy.

## ENGINEERING

Maths and Physics are required for all types of Engineering; Further Maths is very useful (especially for Oxbridge candidates). Chemistry is required for Chemical Engineering, and Technology A-level may be helpful and of interest to future Engineers.

## ENGLISH

The Pre-U is required.

## GEOGRAPHY

The A-level is almost always required.

## HISTORY

Usually the A-level is required.

## LAW

There are no A-level requirements, but very high grades are needed because competition tends to be fierce. Critical Thinking AS might be a useful preparation for the Law university admissions test (the LNAT).

## MATHS, COMPUTER SCIENCE

These courses will require Maths A-level, and it is recommended that you take Further Maths as well (indeed, it is essential for some courses, e.g. at Cambridge). For some computing courses Physics may also be required.

## MEDICINE

Requirements vary between the different medical schools, but A-level Chemistry is required, and usually two of Maths, Physics and Biology. Most now require Biology at least to AS-level.



## MODERN LANGUAGES

For French, German and many Spanish courses the relevant Pre-U courses will be required. Other Modern Languages can be taken up at university, but most language courses would expect you to have studied at least one, and preferably two, of the languages on offer at Westminster.

## MUSIC

Requirements differ between Music courses at universities and at Music Colleges. The Head of Department for Academic Music will advise.

## PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS (PPE) AND RELATED SUBJECTS

Oxford imposes no specific requirements for PPE but advises that “History and Mathematics are useful backgrounds, but are not essential”. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that with Maths you have an advantage. As well as for PPE, Economics is also useful for subjects such as Politics, Psychology & Sociology (‘PPS’ at Cambridge), Human Sciences (at Oxford) and Archaeology & Anthropology (at both Oxford and Cambridge).

The Critical Thinking entry in this brochure describes the possible usefulness of taking Critical Thinking to AS-level as a preparation for the Thinking Skills Assessment test (TSA) that is required by all Oxford colleges if applying in PPE and some Cambridge colleges if applying in PPS.

## PSYCHOLOGY

At least one Maths/Science subject is desirable for applications to Psychology courses, even those courses with a bias towards social rather than experimental psychology.

## SCIENCE

University Physics requires Maths A-level as well as Physics. Some Chemistry courses require Maths or Physics A-level as well as Chemistry. Biology courses tend to require at least two Maths/Science A-levels: Biology A-level is essential and Chemistry A-level is highly desirable.

## OTHER COURSES

Other courses tend to have no specific A-level requirements, but subjects that are similar in discipline to the degree subject are recommended (e.g. a social science and/or a science for Anthropology; History, Economics or Geography for Politics).

## FINE ART AT UNIVERSITY/ART & DESIGN SCHOOLS/DRAMA

The Head of Art and the Director of Drama will advise.

## APPLYING TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

An increasing number of our pupils apply to American universities. The application process is very different, and if you are interested, you should seek advice from your Housemaster as soon as possible. To make an American application you will probably be required to sit up to three SATII subject tests. It is not necessary to choose your A-levels according to these tests, but bear in mind that the choice is limited and if you are not studying the subjects at A-level some extra tutoring and work will be required. More information on the subjects examined at SATII can be found at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Advice on American and International University applications may be obtained from Dr S Ragaz, [sharon.ragaz@westminster.org.uk](mailto:sharon.ragaz@westminster.org.uk)

Further UK university information or advice may be obtained from Ms Katharine Radice, Higher Education Adviser, who can be contacted at: [katharine.radice@westminster.org.uk](mailto:katharine.radice@westminster.org.uk)



# Course information

On the following pages each A-level and Pre-U course is described in detail together with the entrance examination(s) required.

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# Art

Art is a popular and successful subject offering a wonderful opportunity for those fascinated by the visual world to expand and develop their work. There is ample opportunity for highly personal production and written response, with an emphasis on self-motivation. Study of art to this pre-degree level is a lifestyle choice treated far beyond the confines of any mere examination criteria. The course offers a unique experience in itself by making a rich and imaginative contribution to your CV. However, Art is an essential choice for those intending to make an application to creative courses at university, including Architecture.

The Pre-U programme contains three units: a portfolio of coursework, a written personal investigation and a concluding practical project. In all cases pupils are required to direct their work in accordance to personal motivations and enthusiasms. The learning will not be dictated. Deadlines are generous and ambitious work is encouraged. An enviable range of techniques and processes are available and it is possible to offer a bespoke programme for each pupil. The unique environment of the life class provides a forum for serious and sophisticated young artists to engage with a long established discipline. These compulsory sessions underpin our ambitions to make great art.

The Art Department endeavours to undertake ambitious study tours in this country and abroad including Chicago and New York. These experiences build on the sense of purpose that flows through the inspirational studios and supports the atmosphere encouraging spontaneous and unselfconscious work. Our fundamental concern is to ensure a base of 'transferable skills'. Imagination, creativity, lateral

thinking and expressive activities are all prized assets of the artist. These skills are developed and encouraged through an intellectually demanding programme. Art History is cunningly threaded through the course to provide a rich source of reference and creative stimulation. This is complemented by a programme of regular critiques and seminars. The culminating 'Summer Show' is a chance to exhibit the best of your production to a large invited audience.

Our approach is predominantly Fine Art based, however the skills developed through the course are essential to any artistic discipline including design-based alternatives such as *product*, *automotive* and *graphic design*; photography, filmmaking and animation are enhanced by audacious digital advancements creating exciting opportunities.

The ultimate visual discipline is recognised as **Architecture**, which represents a superb ambition for a young person, blending the creative, visual, psychological and mathematical; indeed Walter Gropius, the founder of the influential German art school *the Bauhaus*, described it as the most important discipline of all. Many leading architects, including Richard Rogers, consider Art to be the primary subject for potential students; a portfolio is required for interview.

Beyond Westminster artists have a vast number of options. The default application is to an Art Foundation Course, a one-year diagnostic programme designed to assist students in deciding which of the many disciplines they are most suited to. Direct entry to a university is possible, provided the pupil is convinced of their chosen speciality.

The number of courses on offer is phenomenal and reflects the growth of an image conscious world: it is imperative that we have intelligent and talented people leading the way. Jobs in the multimillion pound industry of Art & Design can offer a fulfilling and rewarding career path.

If you are passionate about the visual world, enjoy exploring creative, aesthetic and expressive activities then you will find yourself utterly fulfilled by the Pre-U programme. However, pupils are advised that a previous study of Art & Design, for example at GCSE level, is essential.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

No formal examination is used, and the procedure is intended to be a genuine opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the best of their abilities. Portfolios including sketchbooks and any other endeavour will be inspected on the day of the timed examinations. Careful preparation of the work is expected and good presentation skills will be valued. Organising the work by use of an A1/A2 black portfolio (making occasional use of plastic sleeves for example) is the preferred method for submitting the work. Candidates who are called back to interview will return with the portfolio and discuss their work with the Art staff.

DEPARTMENT CONTACT  
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# Art History

Westminster offers an excellent opportunity to study Art History in unique surroundings in the centre of London. Immediate experience of an array of architecture as well as major collections such as the Tate Galleries, The National Gallery, the V & A, The British Museum, The Wallace Collection, The Saatchi Gallery and the Courtauld Institute, help to bring the history of painting, architecture, sculpture, film and installations into the classroom. In an era of increasing globalisation it can also provide a fascinating insight into other cultures and societies.

The subject is recommended to those who enjoy History and English but also wish to explore visual culture and language. It is enjoyable for Modern Linguists, Classicists and Artists and combines well with most other subjects. Anyone wishing to study Architecture, Politics or Philosophy would find it useful and highly informative.

At Westminster we take the new Pre-U course and will be taking 4 papers to examination level at the end of two years. Paper 1 is a visual survey of Western and Non-Western art. Students will study Painting, Sculpture and Architecture from the Classical World to the 21st Century. There are two historical topics in Paper 2 which are 'Gothic Art and Architecture 1140 – 1540' and 'Art and Architecture in Europe and the United States in the 20th and 21st Century'. The thematic topic, which is paper 3, is called 'Art and the City – Barcelona'. At the end of the first year pupils begin preparing for a long essay or thesis of 3,000 words on a subject of their choice and this is Paper 4.

Art History is a rigorous academic subject, and a pupil will be expected to develop research and essay skills. It prepares pupils well for further study at university. The subject can be studied alone, or in combination with a range of other subjects, at most universities including Oxford and Cambridge.

The commercial world of the 21st Century is highly visual. The marketing and advertising world is constantly seeking the visually aware. One important aim of Art History is to produce visual literacy; the ability to assess images of all kinds critically and perceptively and discover proof. This unique combination of visual sensitivity and intellectual rigour has proven valuable in areas such as journalism, advertising, publishing, law and film and television work. More directly related careers include those in teaching and research, conservation and restoration, museum and gallery administration, commercial galleries and auction houses. It must be remembered too that many students study the subject at school but go on to further study in a wide range of other subjects some of which relate to Art History such as PPE, SPS, Archaeology and Anthropology, or Architecture.

Small groups (of about 10 pupils) are taught by three different teachers and the class work is based around PowerPoint presentations, and heated discussion. The department is located in the Weston building and has beautiful rooms which are fully equipped for the subject. There are currently two obligatory trips, one to Paris in the first year and the other to Barcelona in the second year. There is also a voluntary trip to New York which is run by the Art and Art History departments.

Work experience and outreach programmes are an important part of the department's work and pupils are able to participate in a number of schemes. The department has direct links with Sotheby's, The Courtauld, Christies, the Art Fund, the ICA, the University of London, The Estorick, The Queen's Galleries and other exciting places. The History of Art Society invites excellent speakers every term from all walks of art related life.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The Pre-U course is very challenging and exciting and excellent grades are obtained with hard work and a thirst for the subject. You are not expected to have prior knowledge of the subject for the Entrance Examination where you will be asked to compare images and write a brief essay either about an exhibition you have seen or a response to a given article. We are looking for clarity of thought, enthusiasm and visual awareness.

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# Classics

Full Classics at Westminster consists of Latin and Greek; both are taught and studied rigorously with an emphasis on language, literature and historical background. The course provides scope both for the analytically minded and for those whose talents are creative.

Much of the time is devoted to reading classical authors in the original languages. The aim is to be able to translate texts accurately and sensitively, but also to appreciate, understand and criticise them as literature; criticism and comment play an important part in the course.

A good GCSE pass is the normal qualification for admission to the Pre-U course. For boys and girls who have done little or no Greek but wish to study it to Pre-U in the Sixth Form at Westminster, special arrangements can be made (including a summer school). Several pupils in recent years have started Greek with us and have enthusiastically gone on to achieve great success.

Classics combines well with other subjects in the blocking system, most commonly English, History and Mathematics. Latin or Greek may also be studied singly or in conjunction with other A-level/Pre-U choices. Since the cultures of Greece and Rome are at the roots of Western European civilisation, there are many natural affinities and connections. English, History and Modern Languages therefore make sensible combinations with Latin and Greek.

A classical education at school enables a pupil to apply for university entrance to read Classics or a number of other subjects, e.g. Law, PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics), English, Philosophy, Oriental Languages. With the comparatively small numbers of classical students in the country, the Westminster full-time classicist is in an exceptionally favourable position for university entrance as compared with those studying almost any other subject.

For those who continue to read Classics at university, a wide variety of careers in business or the professions is available as well as the obvious academic fields of research, teaching, archaeology and museum work. Recent surveys show that Classicists are looked on with considerable favour by employers; it is recognised that the study of Classics implies the capacity for hard and careful work, a sensitivity to the use of language, and the ability to comprehend and manipulate ideas.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance exam is aimed at assessing language competence only, through translation from Latin and Greek into English. There are two questions. The first is a series of around ten sentences, each featuring one or more constructions that should have been studied before GCSE. The second is an unseen passage of roughly the level of a higher-level GCSE paper. The vocabulary prescribed for GCSE is regarded as a sufficient base for these exercises. Those who proceed to the interview stage may expect to be asked some questions about their reading and their general motivation; they will also have an opportunity to show how they respond to teaching, by being taken through a further passage for translation.

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# *Drama and Theatre Studies*

This course develops practical, creative and communication skills. You will extend your ability to create drama, either in a performing or production role, or both. You will also be required to write about theatre and to develop your powers of analysis to become an informed critic. The course will involve taking part in drama productions, as well as studying plays, playwrights and theatre practitioners.

This can lead to further study in Higher Education, and may lead on to a career in the performing arts. Each year one or two Westminster pupils go on to drama schools with a view to entering the theatre, film or television professions, and a number have gone on to make very successful careers.

More commonly though, Drama and Theatre Studies complements a range of subjects and is useful in building confidence and improving presentation skills for any career. There are single or combined honours courses in drama at many highranking universities, commonly in conjunction with English. Oxford and Cambridge have less to offer, but there is a very good course at Cambridge called English and Drama with Education Studies, which has a strong practical drama component.

It's worth noting that, while some entrants have anxieties about whether Drama and Theatre Studies is viewed seriously enough by the top university admissions officers, the university success rate of those who take it is on a level par with other subjects at Westminster.

## AS

We examine how plays are put together, their social/cultural/historical significance, and the ways in which they can be brought to life on the stage. Study is through workshops, research, theatre visits and discussion. You will be assessed on a combination of practical work and written assignments. These include taking part in a live production, studying other theatre practitioners, and reviewing a performance that you have seen in the theatre.

## A2

You will work with fellow students on the process of devising an original piece of drama for presentation to an audience. You will be assessed both on your individual contribution to the process and on your final performance. Assessment is on a combination of practical work and written analysis of your process.

The course culminates in a written exam, for which you will also study a number of plays from different periods and cultures, and present your ideas for their interpretation on stage.

**NB** Pupils taking this course will be required to attend a number of productions out of school, and may on occasion need to put in extra time in preparing for their own performances at various points in the year.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

You will be asked to write about a production you have seen (20 mins), and one you have taken part in, either on- or back-stage (20 mins). There will also be a short extract from a play, which you will be asked to analyse in terms of its dramatic content, by answering a number of short questions (20 mins).

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# Economics

With Economics you can start something completely new on an equal footing with everyone else, since neither Economics nor Business Studies is taught here at GCSE level. It is one of the most popular A-level subjects at Westminster as it combines well with arts and science subjects. You do not need to study Maths or even to be 'good at Maths' to study Economics at A-level. It is more important to be able to think and express yourself clearly. However, for any university course in pure Economics or where Economics is a component, A-level Maths is advantageous; Further Maths even more so. An increasing number of universities require Maths.

## WHAT'S IN THE SYLLABUS?

- Unit 1 Competitive Markets – how they work and why they fail
- Unit 2 Managing the Economy
- Unit 3 Business Economics and Economic Efficiency
- Unit 4 The Global Economy

The two AS modules are taken at the end of year 12, and the two A2 modules in year 13. There is no coursework.

## WHAT UNIVERSITY COURSE COULD IT LEAD TO?

Pure Economics courses can be found at Cambridge, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), University College London (UCL), Warwick, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Birmingham, Nottingham, Durham, Exeter and many other firstclass universities. It is also found as an ingredient in courses such as Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) and Economics and Management (both at Oxford) and in many other double-honours courses at other leading universities.

There are also many university courses for those who have

studied Economics but not Maths A-level, for example Cambridge's Politics, Psychology and Sociology (PPS) course. In recent years, the Archaeology and Anthropology courses at Cambridge and Oxford have also become popular steps from Economics. Other first-class universities offer many similar courses.

## AND CAREERS?

Economics is useful for a very wide range of careers, for example:

- In the City, in investment banking, commercial banking, investment management, trading and financial research.
- In the economic development world, for example, the World Bank.
- Broader careers such as management generally, advertising, accountancy and law.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

In the recent past, the questions have been a mixture of:

- Interpreting a graph (10% of marks)
- General Knowledge questions (15%). For example, in 2008 we asked: "In what country is Guantanamo Bay and why was it chosen by the US Government to detain suspected terrorists in?"
- A cause and effect question (25%), e.g. "What might happen if being charged for music was made illegal? Describe as many possible effects as you can."
- A discussion essay (50%), e.g. "Suppose the British Government launched a scheme whereby a onetime award of £10,000 would be given to every female who reached the age of 21 without having had a baby. What would be the advantages, disadvantages and difficulties of such a scheme?"

(2008). In 2009 we gave the medical and general health background to the proposal that all bread sold in the UK should by law contain folic acid and asked for an essay on the benefits, drawbacks and dangers of the compulsory addition of vitamins and other supplements to food and water sources.

The 2011 exam will be similar to the above, although of course we reserve the right to change the content, format and balance as we see fit. In addition, we shall hold no interviews in Economics but instead shall invite candidates who get to that stage to sit a one-hour multiple-choice test of thinking skills. Half of the 20 questions will comprise a few lines of text with the task of identifying a feature such as the main conclusion of the text, an assumption contained in it or a flaw in its reasoning. The other half will comprise simple problem solving exercises (or 'puzzles').

## HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THE ENTRANCE EXAM?

You can't. It is designed for people with no prior knowledge of Economics and, as you see, is really examining how many things you can spot in a question and any connections or tensions between them.

Similarly, the thinking skills test cannot be rehearsed or revised for (and we hold no sample questions as the test is independently set for us by Cambridge Assessment of Cambridge University and is administered and marked by them).

However, do you read the newspapers systematically yet?

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# English Literature

If you decide to take up English Literature in the Sixth Form at Westminster the qualification you will be studying for is called the Pre-U run by Cambridge International Exams (CIE). Pre-U courses help to instil working habits and approaches which prepare pupils to study at university. Literature in English is an exciting and demanding course at the heart of the Humanities in which you read and study a very wide range of texts – from Shakespeare to Ian McEwan and Zadie Smith – over a two year period before you sit your public examinations and gain your qualification. It thrives on your personal input, interests and commitment and offers an approach to literature which has scope, breadth and depth. Literature specialists in the Department at Westminster devise courses suitable to imaginative and talented candidates who are not daunted by demanding reading programmes and lively debate as well as creative and critical writing.

Pre-U Literature in English is a very popular subject for our Sixth Formers. It primarily deals with the exploration and representation of ideas, themes and language effects in the principal genres of literary writing, but with special emphasis on novels, poems, plays and critical writing. It complements other essay writing subjects, but not exclusively so: it is often seen as an interesting and challenging subject for those who are following a Science focused course for example.

Some of the features of the course, the way that it's taught and its culture include:

- Reading, talking and writing about challenging fiction, poetry and plays;
- Aiming to write engaging essays on literature which display increasingly strong analytical and discursive skills, and good study, research and writing habits;
- Taking up a variety of critical approaches through different styles of teaching from at least two teachers;
- Entering critical and creative prizes run by the Department such as The Phillimore and The Gumbleton prizes;
- Being taught in small, relatively informal teaching groups where your opinions are actively sought: we like students to make regular contributions and take responsibility for their ideas and perceptions;
- Reading and writing independently on the 'personal investigation' (25% of the qualification) which involves a sustained comparison of texts by different authors which relate directly to your own areas of reading and interest;
- Forming an excellent basis for the study of English at university level but also a good basis for other arts courses and future careers in areas such as law and the media or any occupation where language is enjoyed, scrutinised or depended upon.
- Embarking upon a two year course that allows you to develop at your own pace before sitting for three final exams (Poetry and Prose, Dramatic Texts, Unseen Extracts), but which also gives you an opportunity to show universities examples of independent initiative as well as likely examination performance by means of three integrated prize essays.

## EVENTUAL QUALIFICATION

Almost all candidates have gained Distinctions in Pre-U Literature in English. Distinction Level 3 and Distinction Level 2 roughly correspond to Grades A and A\* at A-level. Distinction Grade 1 is considered to be higher than an A\* and was achieved by just under a third of candidates studying Literature in English in the first session of exams in June 2010 here at Westminster. Universities typically ask for a D2 or D3 mark when they make their offers.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

You will sit a one hour entrance paper for Literature in English in which you will answer one question in essay format. The question will ask you to respond to a piece of unseen prose literature (typically taken from a novel) and provide you with a 'prompt' about a possible approach you could consider taking.

You should not worry about the use of specialised knowledge or terms in answering this question. The aim of the exam is to assess your intuition, accuracy and originality when writing about an unseen piece of literature, rather than to test what you have learned in your English lessons at your current school. The best preparation for the exam is to read widely and carefully in literature and strive to work as hard as possible in your existing GCSE literary studies.

## DEPARTMENT CONTACT

Mr R J Pyatt

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# Geography

The major requirement for any prospective student of Geography is an interest in society as a whole, in the contemporary world in which we live, and in the issues which are now at the forefront of political, economic, environmental and social debate. The immediacy and international relevance of the course content allows students considerable opportunity for developing ideas and opinions in discussion and on paper.

## THE COURSE

The A-level is a broad based course, combining the natural and human worlds, and examining the interaction between the two. There are two exams at the end of each year; in Year 12, answers are relatively short, whilst in Year 13 for A2, candidates are required to write essays. There is no coursework.

In the first year, the AS modules look at the key elements of:

- 1) the physical environment
  - atmosphere and weather
  - river processes
  - lithosphere, weathering and slopes
- 2) the human environment
  - population and resources
  - migration
  - settlement dynamics.

In the A2 part of the course, there is in-depth treatment of a selected number of themes, taken from both the physical and economic/social elements of the subject. There is also greater emphasis on the interplay of the natural and human environments as they affect contemporary issues. These units are likely to include themes such as social justice, sustainable development, tourism, globalisation, trade and the global economy, hazard management and desertification.

Fieldwork is an integral part of any geographical study. All students currently attend a very popular five day field course to the Gower Peninsula in the first year of the A-level. This offers the chance for first hand investigation and the opportunity to apply theories and key ideas to a new location. There may also be opportunities to take part in optional overseas trip to Morocco, visiting Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains.

## SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

Any of the Sciences, Mathematics, History and Economics offer good academic linkages as companion subjects to Geography at A-level. Indeed, the mix of Arts and Sciences within the field of Geography does allow considerable flexibility when making A-level subject choices. While the study of Geography at GCSE is not an essential prerequisite for A-level, it is nevertheless desirable.

Geography is not a vocational subject by any means, but those who continue to pursue university degree courses in the subject develop a range of highly sought after analytical, numerical and research skills and a reputation for being eminently employable. Geography's wide ranging disciplines, spanning the Arts and Sciences lend themselves to careers in which a logical, methodical approach to problem solving is required, in:

- a) business and commerce
- b) the human environment – urban, rural and regional planning, globalisation, inequality and uneven development, economic activity

- c) the relationship between humans and the physical environment – green issues, resource management and conservation, remote sensing, water, minerals, energy and landscape
- d) the natural environment – geology, oceanography and meteorology.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The exam lasts one hour and comprises two sections. The first is an Ordnance Survey mapwork/data response style section with short answers. The second section requires candidates to write one essay selected from a choice of five very open-ended titles on key geographical themes. These titles are designed so that candidates are not disadvantaged by what they have done thus far for GCSE. It is not the principal aim of the exam to test knowledge, but rather to provide candidates with the opportunity to display their geographical interest and understanding.

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# History

History is one of the most popular A-level subject choices at Westminster. About one half of the Sixth Form year study History at present, in combination with a very broad range of other subjects, both arts and sciences. It is studied in stimulating surroundings and the department aims to take full advantage of the unique opportunities afforded by the proximity of London museums, galleries, libraries and monuments. We currently offer the A-level course (OCR) which we believe continues to provide sufficient stretch and challenge for even our brightest pupils.

A wide range of History courses, from mediaeval to modern, is offered and pupils have as great a degree of choice in selecting their area of specialisation as is practicable. Each set will study papers on English and European (or American) History with two different teachers (who will choose the period and topics to be covered), and pupils may choose which set to join in their selected (timetable) 'block'. There will normally be two or three History sets in each timetable 'block', each following a distinctive path, and thus providing a clear alternative. The two AS examined modules will be taken at the end of the Sixth Form year, and whilst it is theoretically possible for a pupil to 'cash in' for an AS qualification after one year of study, it is envisaged that pupils will be opting for a two-year A-level course from the outset. Over the two year course there are three examined modules to be sat in all, as well as a coursework component (two 2,000 word essays) – for which pupils are encouraged to identify their own topic of research within a prescribed topic.

There is also a course of General History (non-examined) which will be designed to introduce pupils to broader historical themes and topics of general interest beyond the scope of the A-level course, and thus deepen and enrich their historical experience; and a Sixth Form Prize Essay competition ('The Gibbon').

Visits to sites, museums and galleries play an important part at some stages of the course, and some sets have travelled abroad (to Ireland, Paris, Normandy, Aachen, Berlin etc.) for background study on their respective periods. Our History Society invites well-known scholars to its meetings to talk on their areas of special interest. Recent speakers have included Michael Wood on Aethelstan, Steven Gunn on Henry VII, Ronald Hutton on Oliver Cromwell, Tim Blanning on the Triumph of Music, Derek Beales on the Risorgimento, and Martin Gilbert on Winston Churchill.

To study History successfully involves considerable amounts of reading and writing. Although fluency comes with practice, it would be unwise to embark upon the course without sound literary skills and some enthusiasm for reading. Those who derive most benefit from History are those who enjoy discussion and debate, both orally and on paper.

History may be combined with any other subject which the timetable allows, including a clutch of sciences.

A foreign language (either modern or ancient) is particularly valuable for an historian wishing to carry the subject to university level. Maths combines well with History for those looking towards PPE or similar courses at university. History continues to be highly valued by the professional, civil service and business worlds, both for its inherent content and for the intellectual training and habits of critical thinking that it imparts. The study of History at GCSE is not a prerequisite for A-level.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The History exam for applicants to the School in the Sixth Form is an hour long exercise in two parts, a source analysis or comprehension and an essay. The aim is to set the source analysis on a period or topic of history that probably no candidate will have studied (to ensure a level playing field), and to offer general essay questions for which all candidates can use whatever specific knowledge they possess. In preparation, therefore, for both the written paper as well as the interview, candidates should try to ensure that they have, at least, a working knowledge of the topics they are studying as part of their current history course (which need not be GCSE) – or, if they are not currently studying the subject in a formal sense, that they are able to communicate their interest and commitment to the past through informed analysis.

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# Mathematics

The best reason for taking Mathematics at A-level is that you will enjoy studying it: that is, that you will find satisfaction in stretching your intellect to understand abstract ideas and tackle taxing problems. Many people, however, opt for the subject because they feel, not always correctly, that they ought to or need to. You will need to take Mathematics A-level if you want to study Mathematics or Computer Science, Physical Sciences, Engineering, Economics or Management at university; you will find Mathematics A-level helpful while studying Physics A-level, but probably not for any other A-level; you may find Mathematics A-level useful if you are thinking of taking Biology, Psychology, Medicine or Geography at university, but it is not essential; Mathematics A-level can be a good indicator of the ability to cope with the logical aspects of Philosophy at university.

It is often also asserted that it is a good idea to take Mathematics A-level, even if the course is unlikely to be interesting or directly useful to you, as a way of signalling numeracy to prospective employers, but this is only true if you are good at mathematics and will find the A-level relatively straightforward. If you are not a strong mathematician, the A-level can be a real struggle and each year some pupils, including those who have done very well at GCSE, find themselves working very hard and then being disappointed by their results.

Mathematics is a very popular A-level subject at Westminster, studied by about two thirds of the Sixth Form with every possible combination of other subjects. We have seven sets each year studying the single Mathematics A-level: all follow the same course, studying

all three of Pure Mathematics, Mechanics and Statistics, and are taught by two different teachers. Those who are able to are, as a matter of course, taken beyond the A-level syllabus both by covering extra material and by developing their problem solving abilities; conversely with those who need it, we would concentrate on obtaining the best possible A-level grade.

There are in addition four or five sets each year studying for two A-levels in Mathematics – Mathematics and Further Mathematics – in which additional topics are covered, within the same broad areas, and the subject is investigated in a more rigorous and sophisticated way. These sets are taught separately from the single subject mathematicians and have six periods a week of pure mathematics with one teacher and six periods a week, shared by two teachers, covering mechanics and statistics.

Those who are thinking of reading Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics or Engineering at university ought to take Further Mathematics and it is very strongly recommended those who wish to take Economics at university: it is undoubtedly also the case that applications to top universities in Physical Sciences and Economics are considerably enhanced by offering Further Mathematics. The best reason for taking Further Mathematics, however, is simply that for those who are reasonably good at and get pleasure from mathematics, the course is more stimulating, more challenging and therefore more enjoyable than the single A-level course.

At Westminster, many more pupils take Further Mathematics than at most other schools: the majority, in fact, of the better mathematicians in the GCSE year. There is no reason to be concerned that if two of your four A-levels are in Mathematics you will lack breadth in your studies: it is clear that universities are still very keen to accept pupils who have shown the high degree of intelligence and determination that a successful performance in Further Mathematics demonstrates.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance examination in Mathematics will involve only arithmetic, algebra and geometry that students of any educational background are likely to have studied by the end of year 10, but the problems set will not necessarily be routine or familiar: they are designed to test understanding rather than rote learning. There is no separate examination for Further Mathematics candidates.

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# Modern Languages

The Department offers a highly flexible programme over a wide range of Modern Languages to enable pupils to develop their interest in languages and their cultural background.

The Sixth Form provides an exciting opportunity to develop linguistic skills both for beginners and for those who wish to build on their existing knowledge of a language. It is also possible for those pupils who are native speakers or who have a near-native linguistic family background to perfect their writing skills and cultural knowledge to prepare for national examinations.

**French, German, Russian and Spanish** can be studied as mainstream courses leading to the Pre-U qualification for those pupils with a good GCSE pass in the relevant language. **Russian** may also be started from scratch. Provision may be made for native or near-native speakers of these languages to take a one year intensive course (two or three lessons a week) to a Pre-U qualification if there is sufficient demand. Further details of these languages can be found in the pages which follow.

Westminster offers a rare opportunity to undertake an intellectually demanding, yet enjoyable and satisfying course of study which will add a note of interest to any curriculum vitae, particularly at a time when demand by employers for knowledge of lesser taught languages is extremely high. The school regularly offers courses in **Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Italian and Modern Greek**. The small group teaching enables rapid progress to be made, and success may be measured by sitting A-level and GCSE exams or certificates of achievement, as appropriate. Classes

take place in Sixth Form Options lessons or outside the framework of the standard timetable, depending on staff and pupil availability.

## ITALIAN

A one-year course to GCSE or equivalent is offered for beginners in the block of Options lessons. This is a popular and highly successful course which is taught over three lessons per week, and requires a commitment to prepare for the formal assessment at the end of the year. Many pupils who have taken GCSE Italian go on to read Italian at university. There is also an opportunity for native or semi-native speakers to follow an intensive course to Pre-U/A-level. Timetabling will be by arrangement with the teacher. Other classes may be offered if there is sufficient demand.

## MODERN GREEK

Individual and small group tuition is offered for those wishing to start the language. More advanced pupils are prepared for GCSE and A-level examinations. General conversation practice is also available. Timetabling will be by arrangement with the teacher.

## CHINESE

There is high demand for these classes which are offered at all levels. The standard course for beginners is Mandarin, and conversational practice supplements a basic course (Hanyu). A system of graded certificates is being developed as part of the national Asset Languages strategy, and the pupils may elect to sit certificates to suit the standard they achieve. A number of pupils who have discovered their passion for Chinese at Westminster go on to study the subject at university.

Native speakers of Mandarin and Cantonese are prepared for Asset and Pre-U/A-level, as appropriate.

## JAPANESE

The course consists of Japanese language and includes a study of various aspects of Japanese society, culture and business. The language course covers the topic areas in the Asset languages framework, which could adequately be described as 'Japanese for Everyday Communication'. Pupils will focus on reading, speaking and listening skills to gain a very practical introduction to the language. Native speakers of Japanese are prepared for GCSE and/or A-level, as appropriate.

## ARABIC

Beginners follow a course teaching conversational Modern Standard Arabic and learn Arabic script and basic grammar. It may be possible to provide a second-year class for more advanced learners if there is sufficient demand. There has been an enthusiastic take-up of the language, and the course offers a good grounding for those who wish to apply for the study of Middle Eastern languages at Oxford and Cambridge.

## OTHER LANGUAGES

It may well be possible to provide an introduction to, or further study of, Portuguese and Dutch if there is sufficient interest and if timetabling permits.

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# French

For the committed pupil, the study of French in the Sixth Form is exciting and enjoyable. Websites, blogs, films, newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories, poetry and plays are exploited both for their linguistic resources and for their intrinsic interest. Pupils are encouraged to view French as a living expression of a rich culture.

The course builds naturally on GCSE French. We require pupils to be active in the acquisition of their language skills. Pupils are asked to develop a personal portfolio of material drawn from a wide range of sources. This allows for the development of genuine and individual interests and exposes pupils to a variety of media. Presentations given to peers provide an excellent opportunity to share expertise and to stimulate further debate. Weekly conversation classes with the Assistante are designed to boost fluency and extend cultural knowledge.

The Pre-U syllabus prescribes cultural topics such as France during the Second World War, Aspects of the Algerian War and The Nineteen Nineties. These, and others, will be tackled through film, text and other media. More traditional literary texts will also be studied. Grammar is taught and tested both discretely and as part of everyday language usage.

The Department urges all pupils studying Pre-U French to spend time in a francophone environment. Pupils are asked to plan their trip well in advance and to discuss this with their language teacher. In the past pupils have themselves arranged satisfying placements in a variety of settings. The preparatory work in advance of the trip and the reflection after the experience may well form the basis of written or oral tasks.

A good number of applicants each year take up places at Oxbridge and other universities to read French or a combination involving French.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance exam lasts one hour and consists of two parts, equally weighted. Part One involves translation into English of a piece of journalistic French. Part Two involves the writing of a composition in French of about 200 words from a choice of two or three titles. Topics fall within those defined by the GCSE/IGCSE boards.

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# German

In recent years the number of pupils studying German at both IGCSE and Pre-U level has risen at Westminster, reflecting increased popularity of the language at Westminster. Anyone with a good GCSE pass should be able to cope with the course, since most of the necessary grammar work has been covered at GCSE. It lends itself to combination with both arts and science subjects and can be studied for business or cultural interest, or for its own intrinsic academic value.

This two-year course is by no means restricted to the syllabus of the Cambridge Pre-U. In addition to language work, we aim to introduce pupils to a wide range of cultural topics and make extensive use of newspaper articles, the internet and visual media. We shall spend extensive time in the 6th Form studying German history. One to one lessons with our language assistant are also provided.

In literature, we study works by: Goethe, Schiller, Dürrenmatt, Brecht, Schlink, Wedekind, Büchner and Heine. Over the duration of the course we will experience a number of concerts which are organised for the school; and pupils will also be introduced to the Goethe Institut.

For the past 45 years, the Department has run a highly successful exchange programme to Munich, (4 weeks long, in February/July), and it is expected that all pupils on the course participate. This sustained immersion in a German speaking environment has proved to be of immense linguistic and cultural value to our Germanists. At the end of the course, most pupils are fluent in the language and can express ideas with confidence.

At the end of the two-year course, pupils take the Cambridge Pre-U exam, which predominantly uses the target language and tests candidates' linguistic and literature skills.

We have an outstanding record of success, and a significant number of pupils go on to study German at university (notably Oxbridge), sometimes with another language, or in combination with Economics, Management, History or Law. Alumni went on to careers in business, the art world, medicine and university.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

As far as the entrance paper is concerned, it is assumed that candidates will be following a GCSE course in German. The test comprises of a writing exercise (usually letter writing relating to yourself/school/ family/holidays/ activities) and one translation exercise from English to German.

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# Russian

Russian is open not only to those who are already doing the subject, but also to any able and enthusiastic linguists who would like to start it in the Sixth Form. Russian often proves attractive because it is different, yet not alien; those who take it up from scratch are able to join the rest of the Sixth Form group after an introductory course during the first term, and in the past have gone on to success at A-level and to read Russian at university.

The move to advanced Russian from GCSE is a progression from what you already know rather than a sudden leap into difficulty. The skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are all developed further, and as the Pre-U public examination papers are taken at the end of the second year of the course, we can concentrate throughout on studying Russian language and culture, not merely preparing for examinations.

There is a literary element in Pre-U Russian, and we read as widely as possible in a range of genres: the post-Soviet Russian media are a source of enormously interesting material; and we try to make the course an introduction to Russian literature generally, reading fiction, drama and poetry by the great Russian writers of the 19th and 20th centuries. The more you read, both in Russian and translation, the better.

In addition, everyone is encouraged to learn about and appreciate Russian life, culture, and history. Outings are arranged to films, exhibitions and the theatre. A visit to Russia during the Easter holidays in Year 12 is valuable and exciting linguistically and culturally: a language course combined with accommodation in a Russian family provides both academic stimulus and an opportunity for closer acquaintance with the Russian way of life.

Russian combines readily in the Sixth Form with other languages, modern and classical, as well as with English, History and other Arts subjects; it has also been studied successfully with Mathematics and Economics, and even with the Sciences.

More than a dozen top British universities offer courses in Russian and are very keen to recruit students with a good prior knowledge of the language. We have an excellent record in placing pupils at Oxford colleges in particular. Russian (usually language and literature) can be studied in higher education with another language, on its own, or in a variety of more broadly based combinations such as Russian and English, Russian and History, Russian and Philosophy, Russian Studies, and so on; it can serve as an introduction to the other Slavonic languages too.

A degree in Russian (as in any other modern language) can lead to a wide range of careers, very often unrelated to Russian. It can also, however, have specific career uses in the professions, the media, commerce, government, international organisations (such as the United Nations), and so on. Graduates in Russian have become much sought after in recent years as many companies begin to exploit the tremendous business potential offered by the new Russia.

Russian has a distinct rarity value, and is bound to be of continuing importance in the world; indeed, the prospects for Russian at the moment seem more open than ever.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance exam for those with prior knowledge of Russian involves reading comprehension questions, the composition of a GCSE-style letter in Russian, and a question testing literary aptitude. Oral skills will be tested at interview.

Those wishing to start Russian from scratch have to answer questions testing general linguistic aptitude and also literary aptitude – no knowledge of Russian is required at all.

Native speakers can usually be prepared for public examinations outside the timetable and should therefore in most cases not select Russian as one of their four subjects for the entrance examination – if in doubt about this, please enquire.

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# Spanish

## COURSE OVERVIEW

You will follow the Pre-U syllabus, which means that you will sit all your public examination papers at the end of the two-year course. You will be taught by two teachers: one will help you to develop your language skills post-GCSE; the other will introduce you to some fascinating modern Spanish and/or Latin American literature, including poetry, drama and prose, as well as a number of films by Pedro Almodóvar, Guillermo del Toro and Carlos Saura. Westminster's central London location is clearly an advantage for language students and, as such, trips are frequently organised throughout the year to see live performances of plays or screenings of new films studied in class. In addition, the native Spanish lectors will fine-tune your speaking skills in small groups each week.

## INDEPENDENT STUDY

As well as the language-based classwork, you will work through a Spanish grammar text on your own, at your own pace, on which you will be tested at regular intervals: this will help you to develop some essential, independent study skills in preparation for university education. We very much hope, too, that you will want to read as widely as possible around the texts, authors and directors we cover in class in your free time, either in Spanish or English translation – your teachers will happily provide suitable recommendations throughout the course.

## WORK EXPERIENCE & LANGUAGE COURSES IN SPAIN

The department actively encourages all Sixth Form Hispanists to spend time in a Spanish speaking country during the course of their studies at Westminster. We are very happy to organise work experience placements in Spain, for example, which can be undertaken either during the Easter holidays or at the end of the first year over the summer – accommodation is usually provided in families and there is always a wide selection of placements to choose from, depending on individual interests. If, on the other hand, you would prefer to take a language course during one of your holidays, then this can be organised too and we have had links with a school in Valladolid, NW Spain, for over 15 years. Whatever you choose, the opportunity to hone your speaking skills further and experience real Spanish family life at first hand will clearly be of great benefit; indeed, the extra confidence gained, especially in terms of effective oral exam preparation, has always been highly valued by Westminster pupils over the years.

## CHILEAN EXCHANGE

If you are keen to extend your knowledge and understanding of Hispanic culture even further, then a number of exchange places (approximately 6 – 8 per year) with our partner school in Santiago de Chile are on offer to all Sixth Form Hispanists. Each leg of the exchange lasts for 3 weeks: the Chilean pupils stay in London with families and attend classes in January; Westminster pupils return to Santiago and follow similar arrangements in August. Further details will be available at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

## SPANISH IN THE SIXTH FORM AND BEYOND

Spanish with another language or perhaps English, History, Economics or Art History is certainly a popular, traditional combination, but it is by no means the only option on offer: you may wish, for example, to combine Spanish with a Science or Mathematics, since a working knowledge of any foreign language, and in particular Spanish – given its continued global importance – will always be highly valued by employers in any field of work, all the more so if you choose to continue with the language at university, even as an subsidiary subject.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

Pupils wishing to study Spanish in the Sixth Form should, ideally, have achieved A\* at GCSE level in order to cope effectively with the grammatical content of the course but, clearly, the main qualities required are simply determination and enthusiasm. The examination paper for new entrants to Westminster will contain the following two sections, based on GCSE-type materials, with which you will already be familiar:

**Grammar.** Sentences to translate from English into Spanish, involving simple tense usage and GCSE level vocabulary. Example sentence: 'Last year I visited my grandmother who lives in the north.'

**Essay.** An essay of between 100–150 words in Spanish – from a choice of 5 titles – each one based on a GCSE topic area such as School, Family or Holidays.

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# Music

Music can be studied at two stages: as a one year course, leading to an AS qualification, and as a two year course for the full A-level (A2) in music.

Both courses cover generally the same topics: Performance Studies, Composing, Listening and Analytical Skills in almost equal measure. Through these activities the pupils will develop a more informed appreciation of how and why a very wide variety of music was written and/or performed, and improve their skills in performing and composing in a range of styles.

The course is designed in such a way that, for example, strong performers can increase the performing component of their studies, and those with a special interest in composing can concentrate on this component. There are many opportunities to compose and perform in an unrestricted range of styles and genres, including studio music techniques utilising the computer and electronic music facilities of the department.

## MUSIC AS

This is the first half of the full A-level course. It can be taken on its own at the end of Year 12. A short introduction to the course is followed by classes in Baroque Figured Bass, Harmony and Counterpoint, Composition, Aural Skills, Improvisation, Repertoire, Analysis and History, Musicianship Skills and Instrumental Studies. Visits to operas and concerts are arranged and participation in the Orchestra, Choir, Chamber Music and Jazz Band, if appropriate, is expected.

The specific examination units are:

- Unit 1** Performing (15%)
- Unit 2** Developing Musical Ideas (First stage of composition studies) (15%)
- Unit 3** Listening and Understanding (20%)

## MUSIC A2

The full A-level is made up of the AS units (50%), plus three more units of similar topics at A2; these are:

- Unit 4** Specialist Options (Either a composition portfolio or a recital) (15%)
- Unit 5** Performing and Composing (15%)
- Unit 6** Analysing Music (20%)

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

There is no written entrance examination, although candidates who want to do Music are asked to audition.

The candidates should bring their instruments and music (with accompaniments) to perform a pair of contrasting pieces on their first instrument and one piece on any subsequent instrument or voice. The audition will include sight reading, aural and musicianship tests and an interview. Serious composers should bring a copy of a composition or a folio to the audition, which will last approximately 30 minutes.

As far as practical standards are concerned, it is desirable to have achieved a distinction or merit at Grade VI – VII (or equivalent standard) on a principal instrument before starting the course in the Sixth Form. Some degree of elementary keyboard proficiency is a prerequisite and those taking the course would normally be expected to have taken music at GCSE level.

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# Religious Studies

Does God exist? What are the arguments for and against his existence? Is God a product of our psychology or of our society? How should I live? Is there an objective moral truth we should all follow, or do I make my own ethical rules? Do I have free will, and why is there evil in the world? These are the sorts of philosophical and ethical questions examined in this A-level subject: though the course comes under the umbrella of Religious Studies, it is primarily a study of those aspects of Philosophy and Ethics which most clearly overlap with a study of religion.

Lessons are lively and based around in-depth discussion of the often controversial topics. Students who take Religious Studies are a diverse group: some take science based subjects and others prefer more arts-centred courses. The analytical skills developed by Religious Studies students often compliment a wide array of other disciplines and our students go on to study a variety of different courses at university from Medicine to History to Philosophy. The RS A-level is highly regarded by all universities and is recognised by them as imparting vital academic skills.

The Religious Studies department prides itself in not being straight-jacketed by the exam board specification. Whilst preparing our students for the all-important A-level exams, we also believe that it is important to go beyond the confines of the curriculum in order to meet the demands of our questioning students. Students will also be expected to engage with original texts and be encouraged to read as widely as possible.

A selection of the topics studied is shown below:

## PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

- A study of Plato and Aristotle and their influence on the Western philosophical and theological tradition
- Arguments for and against God's existence, including the work of Bertrand Russell, David Hume, Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant
- An examination of the psychological theory of Freud and Jung
- A study of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and other sociologists
- The problem of evil and suffering in the world
- Religious experience, life after death and religious language
- Religion and Science.

## ETHICS

- Five ethical theories: Utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, natural law theory and moral relativism
- The purpose of ethical language
- Free will and determinism
- The nature and role of the conscience and psychological challenges to ideas of conscience
- War, peace and justice
- Environmental ethics
- Sexual ethics.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

It should be noted that GCSE Religious Studies is NOT a requirement of the A-level course. The entrance exam will not presume any prior philosophical or theological knowledge. The exam will consist of a passage from a philosophical or theological text and questions related to the passage. There will also be an essay-type question on a general topic related to philosophy or ethics. Successful candidates will demonstrate a high level of engagement with the questions and a clarity and originality of thought.

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## Sciences

Good reasons for choosing Sciences at A-level are legion. The study of the principles on which the universe functions and the elegant and beautiful patterns of its behaviour provides an absorbing course that will change your view of the world. It will challenge your imagination and your creativity and will enhance and refine your powers of observation.

You may need to decide whether to do an Arts subject to complement your science education. The university study of Natural Sciences, Chemistry or Physics needs Maths (not necessarily Further Maths, though it is a sensible option for those who are predominantly potential physicists), so if you are considering a 2 + 2 or 1 + 3 Sciences/ Arts combination you need to be clear about what you wish to study at university and to consider carefully whether your options really are as open as they might seem. Without Maths, Natural Sciences or any other science course will inevitably be predominantly biological in nature, and there will be maths as part of the university course in any case. If you are thinking of a 2 + 2 combination the Head of Science will be happy to advise you on the implications.

However, a single arts subject, for example History or English or a language (classical or modern), combined with maths and two sciences works well and is popular with both pupils and universities.

Science teaching at Westminster is strongly practically-based, capitalising on the fine laboratories and the essential nature of science. It is also taught in the belief that knowing science is better than knowing about science, so the teaching aims for rigour in the development of scientific thinking and skills. The courses are challenging, but are very rewarding indeed.

There are many opportunities for pupils to become involved with scientific projects beyond the formal curriculum including lecture societies, research groups and the writing and production of the department's high-quality Hooke magazine.

The Head of Science, Dr Kevin Walsh, is always pleased to advise on subject choices involving Science and their implications and may be contacted at: [science@westminster.org.uk](mailto:science@westminster.org.uk)

For pupils contemplating Medicine at university, Mr Sam Baldock (Head of Biology) and Dr Walsh are pleased to offer advice; they may be contacted at [sam.baldock@westminster.org.uk](mailto:sam.baldock@westminster.org.uk) and [science@westminster.org.uk](mailto:science@westminster.org.uk) respectively.

# Biology

Biology is an expansive and fast-moving discipline. Recent decades have seen revolutions in gene technologies, theoretical ecology and medical sciences. The course at Westminster has no bias towards biochemical, cellular, physiological, evolutionary or environmental biology; we are interested in biological systems at all levels from the angle of a bond in a molecule inside a retinal cell of the eye to the evolution of social living in primates.

The most common and best reason for a pupil to choose Biology at A-level is that they enjoyed studying it at GCSE and it is hoped the course at Westminster will enable them to increase their enjoyment of the immense variety, complexity and interdependence of the living world. A background in Biology also allows our pupils to debate intelligently on such great global challenges such as climate change and the management of infectious disease.

At GCSE the emphasis in Biology is often on learning 'facts'. At A-level there are certainly more 'facts' to become acquainted with but this is the means, not the end: pupils are expected to begin applying this knowledge to venture solutions to the many exciting (and often unanswered) questions and problems in the life sciences.

Biology is a practical subject and we believe strongly that practical skills are essential to a successful biological education: the four well-equipped laboratories enable a wide variety of experimental work to be carried out. All Year 12 pupils also attend a two day residential field trip in Surrey.

There is a thriving Biology Society run by pupils which organises presentations, visiting lecturers, debates and visits to exhibitions and laboratories. In 2011 Westminster was the top performing school nationally in the British Biology Olympiad.

## COURSE SPECIFICATION

Pupils follow a course structured around the OCR A-level Biology specification. In both Year 12 and Year 13 assessment is by written papers (see units below) and a number of practical tasks carried out in class (20%). Each class has two teachers, one concentrating on Molecular Cell Biology and the other concentrating on Physiology and Population Biology.

The specific examination units at AS are:

- Cells, Exchange and Transport (15%)
- Molecules, Biodiversity, Food and Health (25%)

The specific examination units at A2 are:

- Communication, Homeostasis and Energy (15%)
- Control, Genomes and Environment (25%)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Candidates should be expecting to achieve an A or A\* grade at GCSE or IGCSE Biology or Dual Award. There is some biochemistry in the course so for candidates who have taken single sciences a good grade at GCSE or IGCSE Chemistry is desirable. Numeracy is important in this subject too, so a pass at GCSE Mathematics is essential.

## SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

We would generally discourage studying Biology at A-level if no other sciences are taken, although individual cases will be considered. Most pupils choose Chemistry plus Maths/Physics in their four choices alongside Biology.

## LIFE SCIENCES AT UNIVERSITY

Very many of our pupils go on to read Medicine or Biological Sciences at university and recent years have also seen our pupils taking up undergraduate courses in Anthropology, Biochemistry, Dentistry, Human Sciences, Physiology, Psychology and Veterinary Medicine.

Most Life Sciences courses at university will require A-levels in Biology and one or two other Maths/Science subjects. Many of the most exciting developments in Biology have, after all, come from the overlap between different scientific disciplines.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The examination is not based on any particular GCSE (or IGCSE) course and, as such, no particular knowledge is assumed beyond Key Stage 3 (i.e. Year 9). It is designed to assess your potential to study the subject at A-level and you should expect to interpret and discuss graphs and diagrams, communicate key principles in the subject and apply your knowledge to unfamiliar situations.

## DEPARTMENT CONTACT

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# Chemistry

The principles of Chemistry underpin our understanding of the world around us and are relevant to all areas of science, from the chemical processes in living organisms to the formation of stars millions of miles away. The core concepts introduced in Chemistry A-level form an important part of any professional scientist's toolkit, regardless of their specialisation.

Pupils at Westminster study Chemistry for a variety of reasons; many study it in conjunction with other sciences and/or maths and go on to study Science at university; many are hoping to study Medicine at university; and a handful study Chemistry on its own because they simply enjoy it, although this would prevent the study of Science at university level. The most common combinations are those with Biology, Mathematics and Physics.

Chemistry A-level is both conceptually challenging and requires good factual knowledge. While the need for the memorisation of factual chemistry remains important, much greater emphasis is placed on the understanding of the principles underlying the material and in relating this to laboratory experience. Indeed considerable time is devoted to practical work and the department has four large well-equipped teaching laboratories as well as a research laboratory. In the Election Term of the Sixth Form pupils have the opportunity to join the research group and investigate new areas of Chemistry. As a result, the department regularly publishes research papers in peer-reviewed academic journals.

## COURSE SPECIFICATION

Pupils follow a course structured around, although not restricted to, the Edexcel A-level Chemistry

specification. Written papers make up 80% of the assessment, with 20% of marks coming from internally assessed practical tasks. Many of the core concepts have been touched upon at GCSE, although are considered in much greater and more quantitative detail. Pupils often mistakenly believe they need to 'unlearn the lies' they have been told at GCSE level, but in reality the scientific model is merely refined to give a more in-depth understanding. Highlights include:

### AS

- Chemical Calculations
- Atomic Structure
- Structure & Bonding
- Introduction to Thermodynamics
- Introduction to Organic Chemistry
- Main Group Inorganic Chemistry
- Green Chemistry

### A2

- Entropy
- Quantitative Kinetics
- Quantitative Equilibrium
- Advanced Organic Chemistry
- Spectroscopy & Chromatography
- Inorganic Chemistry of the Transition Metals

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Candidates should be expecting to achieve an A\* or A at GCSE or IGCSE Chemistry (or in Combined, Co-ordinated or Integrated Science) and Mathematics.

## CHEMICAL SCIENCES AT UNIVERSITY

For the study of Chemistry at university level, it should be combined at A-level with Mathematics and Physics. The expanding field of Biochemistry makes the combination with Biology

an attractive one. Increasingly scientists are finding themselves working in fields which involve all of the scientific disciplines. Pupils must study A-level Chemistry if they wish to read medical, veterinary or pharmacological sciences or chemical engineering at university. Many other courses in engineering and materials science also welcome the subject as a preparatory A-level study.

About one in three Chemistry graduates will continue with their academic studies, and aim for higher degrees such as PhD or DPhil, or they will aim for a further qualification in, for example, law or education. Chemistry graduates possess adaptability and an analytical cast of mind which makes them attractive to a very broad spectrum of employers.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance examination is designed to test understanding of basic chemical principles rather than factual knowledge of the subject. Whilst some knowledge is of course desirable, the potential of the candidate to study Chemistry at A-level is what we wish to assess. The exam paper will be based on core material and ideas that are covered in all types of GCSE course, whether they are single-subject or dual-award. There is a choice of questions allowing all candidates opportunities to answer on the areas of the subject with which they feel most confident. Candidates will be expected to think on their feet and apply their knowledge and understanding to unfamiliar situations. As such, no special reading is necessary.

## DEPARTMENT CONTACT

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# Physics

## QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

GCSE Separate Sciences (Physics) or Dual Award, at grade A or A\*. A good grade in GCSE Mathematics is also required. Whilst it is not compulsory to take Mathematics A-level when opting for Physics, it is strongly advised to do so; in most years, nearly all A-level Physics pupils are also taking at least one A-level in Mathematics.

## THE SPECIFICATION

The course that will be followed is the Advancing Physics course administered by the OCR examination board. It has been drawn up in collaboration with the physicists' professional body, The Institute of Physics with the specific aim of reflecting physics as it is practised and used today. The course leads to a complete AS-level at the end of the Year 12 and an A2 at the end of Year 13.

Whilst the AS specification caters for those wishing to study Physics as part of a broad post-16 curriculum, the first year of study will include material from the A2 course and further supplementary topics in order to prepare and stimulate pupils in a manner appropriate to Westminster. The course employs a unique range of learning media, including a pupil CD-ROM and course website.

The AS is examined via two written papers (80% of AS) and two pieces of coursework (20% of AS), and then A2 via two written papers (80% of A2) and two pieces of coursework (20% of A2). The subject topics include:

- Communication
- Designer Materials
- Waves and Quanta
- Space and Time
- Matter in Extremes
- Fields and Fundamental Particles.

Throughout the course, pupils will have opportunities to develop practical skills, practise data-handling, use their imagination, use ICT as a research tool, increase their understanding of the part that mathematics plays in physics and to see physics in social and historical contexts. The coursework elements in particular focus on using and developing instrumentation, and collating and presenting information. The often deliberately open-ended nature of the investigative work reflects the emphasis on experiencing physics as it really is.

## A-LEVEL SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

Those thinking of taking Physics, Physics with Maths, Theoretical Physics or Engineering at university should consider taking Physics, Mathematics and Further Mathematics A-levels plus a fourth subject from either the Arts or Science. It is extremely helpful to study Further Maths if you are considering Physics or Engineering at one of the top universities. Without Mathematics, Physics cannot be taken beyond A-level. Physics A-level is highly regarded by medical schools so it is worth considering with Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics. Many universities now offer degree courses in Physics or Engineering with a foreign language so it could be worth combining Physics with a Modern Language. It is worth pointing out that many financial institutions (e.g. investment banks) actively recruit good research physicists (in preference to those with qualifications in economics, finance etc.) to high-powered jobs in the City – the analytic and modelling skills acquired in the study of Physics equip you for a wide range of possible careers.

**Extra Curricular:** There are many ways in which pupils gain extra-curricular experience, including lectures, projects, seminars, discussion groups and so on. The Department is exceptionally well equipped with an electron microscope, seismometer, up-to-date datalogging equipment etc., and there are opportunities to use the facilities for research.

## ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance exam consists of short answer questions that are designed to test some basic knowledge and recall, but more to test a candidate's ability to learn an idea and run with it quickly. Extensive revision is not required, and would be of no help. The exam is not based on any particular GCSE (or IGCSE) course, and as such, no particular knowledge is assumed beyond Key Stage 3 (i.e. Year 9).

Essentially the exam will combine a variety of questions, some in which pupils are expected to perform calculations – for example a question might require a candidate to calculate the acceleration of a rocket of a certain mass with a certain combination of forces on it. Other questions may introduce an area of physics they haven't seen before and ask them to think critically about it – for example a question might give some information about a recent experiment they won't have come across, perhaps at CERN or NASA etc., and the candidate will have to show that they can analyse what the data is showing.

## DEPARTMENT CONTACT

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## Critical Thinking

This demanding AS-level course is designed to give students skills in analysing arguments, spotting weaknesses in logic, and constructing more persuasive arguments of their own. There is good reason to believe that these are 'transferable skills', learnt through practice and discussion in these lessons and applicable to almost any of the major subject areas studied in other courses. We build up the relevant techniques by learning about the characteristic shapes of good and bad arguments; we read and discuss a wide range of material in many fields, taken from text books and from newspaper articles.

To give pupils an idea of what might lie ahead if they choose to take the course, we initially run a 'taster course' of just one lesson per week for the duration of eight weeks. This enables prospective candidates to make a considered

decision. Success in Critical Thinking demands commitment and a willingness to keep refining one's thinking through practice and hard work, and pupils who do not apply themselves thoroughly do not tend to achieve good grades. The subject is only offered as a fifth AS-level and should only be undertaken by those Sixth Formers able to cope with the extra workload.

The multiple choice section of the AS paper is almost exactly the same as a major part of the Thinking Skills Assessment test (TSA) that all Oxford colleges and some Cambridge colleges require candidates to take before their interviews if applying in the following subjects:

Oxford: PPE, Economics & Management, Psychology & Philosophy or Experimental Psychology.

Cambridge: Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, Land Economy, Natural Sciences (Physical & Biological) or PPS.

The TSA is used as part of the overall assessment of candidates but particularly to reduce the number of candidates invited to interview. It would be quite long-range thinking to take Critical Thinking for this precautionary reason but may be worth considering in conjunction with the other reasons for doing it, or trying it.

### ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

There is no entrance exam for this subject.

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## Electronics AS-level

In 1980 the entire mobile phone market was estimated to be for 900,000 handsets; today this number of handsets is sold every day. In 1977 the first Apple computer had 4096 bytes of memory; today a typical iBook has more than 1,000,000,000 bytes. A century ago a few privileged households owned a gramophone; now, in the Western world, every teenager carries thousands of songs in their pocket. All of these changes are the result of the rapid expansion of Electronics over the last 50 years. The study of Electronics at AS-level will show how basic physical principals can be applied by engineers to develop the massive range of communication,

entertainment and industrial systems which are common today.

The WJEC AS-level Electronics course is followed; this course is modular, comprising:

- Introduction to Analogue and Digital systems
- Electronic Circuits and Components
- Programmable Systems

The course is a mix of theory and practical application sessions with the Programming module being assessed by practical coursework. During this module, pupils will learn to program embedded microcontrollers of the type used in phones and similar devices.

AS Electronics is taken as a fifth subject in the Options block and any pupil who wishes may take the course. Commitment is initially to the AS course which is completed in Year 12, however many pupils choose to continue with the A2 course in Year 13.

### ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

There is no entrance exam for this subject.

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