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**Choosing subjects to study in the UK Sixth Form**

The key point is that in the sixth form in UK schools (Years 12 and 13) pupils study far fewer subjects than you have been studying in your own country. This allows you to specialise and study these subjects in much greater depth. The choice of subjects is very important as it can affect which university courses are available to you and also your eventual career path.

The examination system you will follow will normally be A Level.

A few schools in the programme offer either the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) or Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers.

Each system leads to examinations at the end of two years’ study which are essential for entry into university. These qualifications are recognised not only in the UK but also internationally. However, to qualify for entry into university in your own country you may be required to take mandatory national examinations.

In the **A level system** you will normally choose 3 or possibly 4 main subjects and you will take examinations in these after two years of study. Almost certainly you will also be encouraged to undertake study in non-examined subjects (such as General Studies) or your school may enter you for what is called the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification), a major piece of independently researched work.

For the **International Baccalaureate diploma** you have a choice of subjects but you must study literature and mathematics as well. You study your chosen subjects to standard (SL) or higher level (HL) depending on which are more important for university entry onto the course of your choice. Broadly speaking, those subjects you study at higher level will be equivalent to the subjects studied at A level. The idea of the IB is to maintain your breadth of knowledge. In this system you are also required to write an extended essay and to study ‘theory of Knowledge (TOK)’.

The **Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers** are similar to the A level system in that the Highers require one year of study and the Advanced Highers normally require two years. As the name suggests this examination syllabus is followed in many schools in Scotland although some Scottish schools teach A level courses instead.)

The chart on the right shows the proportion of scholarship places available for A level, IB and Scottish Highers courses.

**One year or two years in your UK school**

The scholarship offered by schools through HMC Projects is intended to be **for two years** to enable you to complete your courses and take the final examinations for entry into university or college.

**Your choice of subjects**

Your choice of subjects that you study in your UK school depends on a number of factors:

* Your interest and ability in a subject;
* Your choice of university;
* Your choice of subject you wish to study at university;
* Your choice of career.

There is normally a large range of subjects to choose from in any school but not all schools offer the same range of subjects.

The following points may be helpful:

* Studying English involves studying English literature in depth;
* If you think you might want to choose a foreign language for A level, then you must have a fairly advanced knowledge already. You cannot start from scratch.

It is also important to be aware that universities may prefer certain subjects for entry onto a particular course. Generally, universities can be rather traditional in the subjects they prefer. Be wary if the subject includes the word “studies”… these are not necessarily for the most able students!

You will be wise to check out what is meant in general terms by sciences, mathematics, arts, humanities….

**Table of Subjects**

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| **Subjects popular with universities** | **Subjects offered by fewer schools** |
| **Normally offered by all schools** | **Offered only by some schools** |
| Biology\*Chemistry\*English Literature\*French\*Geography\*History\*ArtMathematics\*Further Mathematics\*MusicPhysics\*Spanish\* | Business StudiesEconomicsClassical CivilisationComputer ScienceDesign Tech (Graphics)Design Tech (Product Design)Drama and Theatre StudiesLatin\*Greek\*German\*PsychologyReligious StudiesPolitics | Media StudiesPhotographyPhysical Education*… and many others …* |

*\*for helpful guidance on subject choices for university courses, go to* [*https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/*](https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/)*.*

**Examples of subject combinations useful for certain university courses:**

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| **Course** | **Preferred subjects for university** |
| Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science | Chemistry and Biology are strongly advised (the majority of medical schools require Chemistry). Maths or Physics is desirable. |
| Natural Sciences | Two or three of Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics. |
| Engineering | Mathematics and Physics are required. Further Mathematics is advised. |
| Computer Science | Mathematics is required. Computer Science or Physics are desirable. |
| Psychology | Usually two Sciences are advised, but entry via Arts subjects is perfectly possible. |
| Economics and PPE | Whilst Mathematics is advised, students should also consider Economics, History, Geography, Politics or Religious Studies. |
| Business Studies, Management, Marketing | Mathematics can be helpful, but not essential. Business, Economics, Geography, Psychology may be helpful. |
| Architecture | A combination of Arts and Science subjects; an Art portfolio is essential. |
| Foreign Languages | Two languages (modern or classical) are desirable but not essential |
| Law | Any A Levels at the highest grade. English Literature, History or Religious Studies are desirable. |