



## Options Booklet 2024-2026

**Please read this document carefully as it gives you information on:**

Which subjects are still compulsory to study in Year 10 & 11.

Which subjects students can choose in Year 10 & 11.

Advice to help students make their choices.

How to complete the options form.

**A link to the online form will be sent to each student's email account following the option evening**

January 11th 2024  
In School Event



**Options Launch**

- Student Careers Day

Thursday 18th  
January 2024



Virtual  
**Year 9  
Consultation  
Evening**

Wednesday 31st  
January 2024



**Options Deadline**

- Completed online

## Introduction to the Option Process

For the first time in their education, students are able to have some choice in the subjects that they study in Years 10 and 11. Part of the curriculum is fixed; the remainder of their timetable will be made up of areas that they choose which could include GCSEs or vocational qualifications.

The aim of this information and the GCSE options presentation is to help you to make the most appropriate choices for your future. It is important that you seek advice and talk to people who can help you with these decisions. They include your subject teachers, subjects' leaders, Heads of House, Heads of Year, tutors as well as your parents and older students who are taking the course already.

We are committed to ensuring that you enjoy your experience of learning in years 10 and 11 and that you strive to achieve the best that you can be. You should aim to choose courses that suit your needs and that will challenge you and help you to develop life skills to prepare you for your future after Ferndown Upper School.

Below you will find:

- An outline of the curriculum structure in years 10 and 11 and the subjects which all students will study.
- A summary of the options subjects which students can choose from.
- A timescale of when you need to make your decision by.
- Details of how to complete the options form.
- Details of how students' choices will affect opportunities during their time at FUS and beyond.

## How do I choose the right courses?

Sometimes the choice is easy; sometimes it comes after a lot of careful thought and discussion. Find out as much as you can about each course from subject teachers before making your decision.

### **Do a course because:**

- ★ You enjoy the subject
- ★ You are good at the subject
- ★ It is a new subject that excites or interests you
- ★ It will help you with your future beyond year 11
- ★ It will give you a good balance of subjects

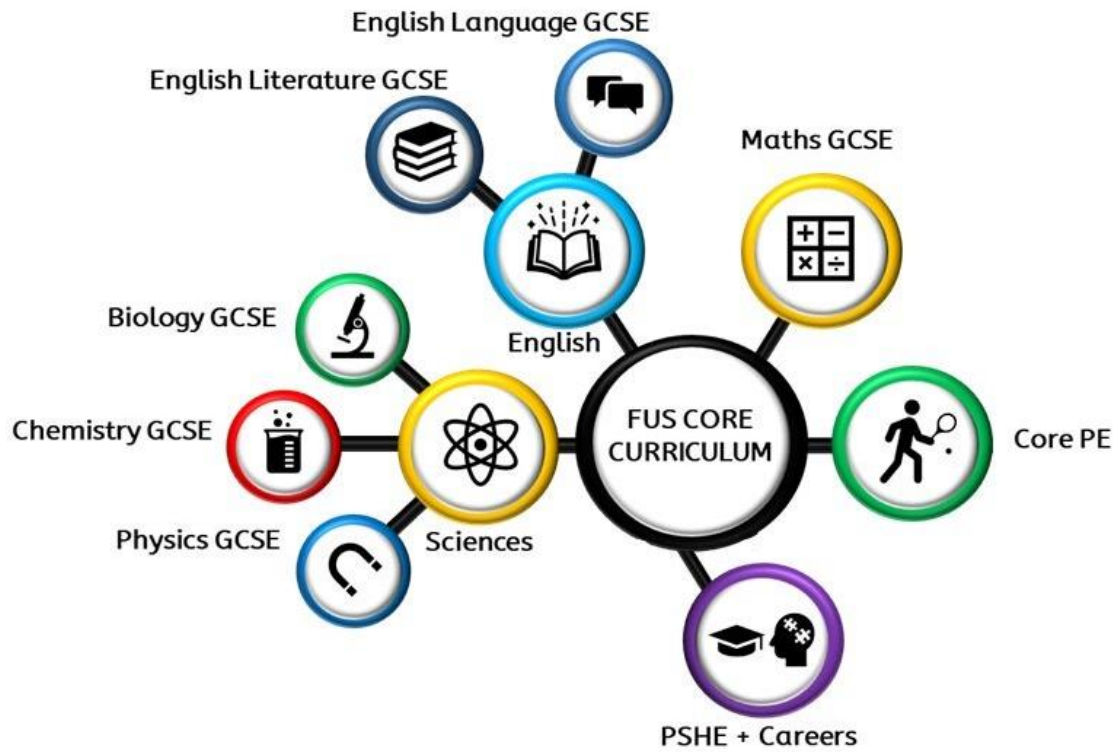
### **Don't choose a subject because:**

- ✗ You want to be with your friends
- ✗ You like the teacher- there is no guarantee that you will get the same teacher for GCSE
- ✗ You think it will be easy

# FUS Core Curriculum

The subjects shown below are subjects which all students must take. These form the Core Curriculum.

English, Mathematics, Single Science GCSEs, Core PE, PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education which includes Citizenship and Religious Education) and Careers.



## English Baccalaureate subjects at GCSE

We are committed to offering a curriculum which provides a broad, balanced, relevant and personalised learning experience for all our students. It should also help to deliver outstanding achievement for all.

Some years ago, the government introduced the English Baccalaureate as a standard of student progress. To achieve this, students need to achieve a good grade or better in the following subjects:

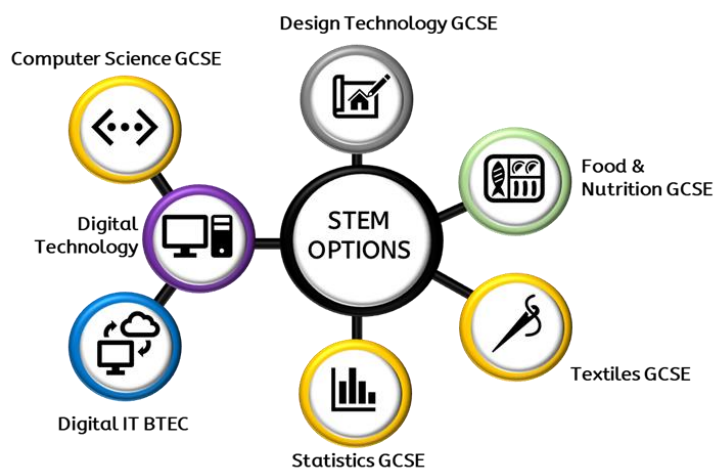
- English GCSEs
- Maths GCSE
- Science GCSEs (Including Biology, Chemistry, Physics and/or Computer Science GCSE)
- History or Geography GCSE
- A Modern Foreign Language GCSE (French or Spanish)

The English Baccalaureate is a standard of achievement. We believe that most students should achieve this standard, although we do not insist that every student study a Modern Foreign Language, History or Geography. While the EBacc collection of subjects is not a qualification in itself it is recognised as a measure of student's achievement both by employers and universities. These are the subjects most likely to be required or preferred for entry to degree courses and ones that will keep the most options open. This standard has become increasingly important as a benchmark of success for universities, colleges and employers, we therefore recommend that all students follow it.

Our aim is to provide a bespoke and personalised curriculum at Key Stage 4. This means giving our students as much choice and flexibility as possible, whilst ensuring they follow examination courses that lead to positive outcomes and give them access to aspirational Post-16 opportunities. So, although we encourage routes such as the Ebacc, and we make this option available to all students, regardless of ability, we do allow routes such as those in creative arts or social sciences too, dependent upon each student's future careers aspirations.

## Boost Your Opportunities with a STEM Option

Over the past few years, we have established ourselves as a successful nationally acclaimed STEM school. This includes our innovative science GCSE curriculum being given as a national example of best practice by an all-UK Parliamentary committee in March 2019. We have a range of STEM subjects to take at GCSE and beyond into our Sixth Form.



Our Statistics GCSE is the latest addition to our GCSE options, and with the best Maths Department in Dorset\* you couldn't be in safer hands. Our Digital Technology Department only grows stronger with four recently built specialist labs and brand new resources totaling over £200,000, see Computer Science GCSE or Digital IT BTEC for more details.

### Why a STEM option?

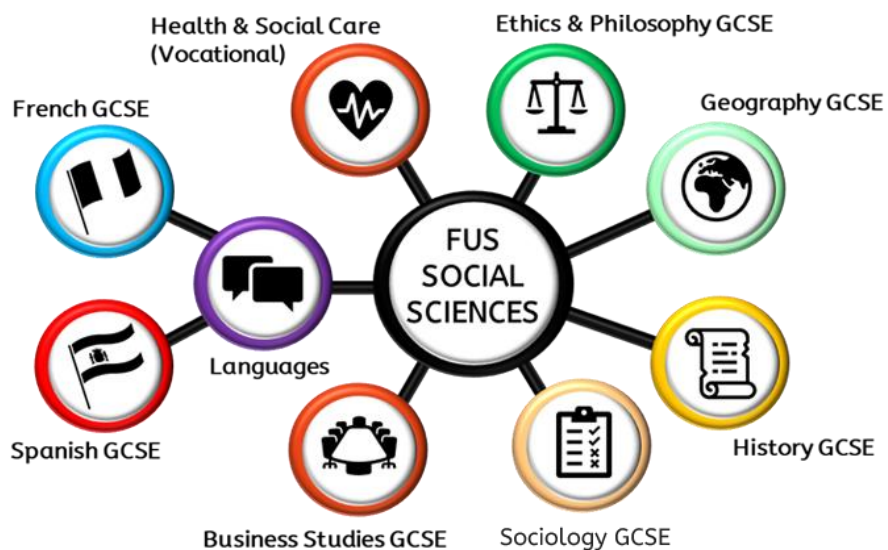
- **JOBS OF THE FUTURE:** There will be 142,000 new jobs in science, research, engineering and technology from now to 2024
- **RAPID RISE:** Jobs in science, research, engineering and technology fields will grow twice as fast as other careers (6% vs 3%), driven by factors including the pace of infrastructure investment and digital innovation
- **SKILLS SHORTAGE:** Current figures show there will be a shortfall in the number of graduates and apprentices available to fill these roles. For example, there will be a 40% shortfall in engineering
- **GENDER GAP NEEDS TO NARROW:** Getting more girls to consider these careers is essential to the success of UK industrial strategy – currently women are less than a quarter of the workforce in four of the five most in-demand industries
- **FUTURE JOBS INCLUDE:** Computer coders; Geotechnical Design Engineers; Intelligence Consultants; Robotics Engineers; Data Scientists

\* Based on the latest national league tables comparing student progress in maths GCSE.

## The Creative Arts, Social Science, PE & Health Subjects

At Ferndown Upper we pride ourselves on the breadth and diversity of the curriculum we offer in Year 9 and this only expands at GCSE level.

We have an options process that enables students to create a suite of subjects that is tailored to their individual goals and ambitions. This is very apparent in the range and combinations of creative and social science options that students can choose, if that is the focus they want to explore.





UK creative industries generate more than £100bn a year to the UK economy and employ more than 2m people. We have students who often select multiple creative options, such as the Art & Design subjects and then continue this pathway through A Levels and onto our highly successful Level 4 BTEC Diploma in Foundation Studies- Art, Design and Media Practice and onto a range of vocational degree courses.

We have students who have gone on to qualify Architecture, Product Design, Games Art Design, Animation, Fine Art, Photography Fashion and Textiles degrees and many more leading courses across the country.

## **Examinations and Assessments in Options**

Different qualifications have different assessment requirements for Key Stage 4 (GCSE and GCSE equivalent courses). Many qualifications have coursework elements that contribute towards the final grade whereas some courses are 100% examined via external examinations in Year 11.

We advise that you look at your options carefully and consider your child's personal strengths and the workload requirements with various coursework/ examinations combinations. Please feel free to ask our staff via email or at the Year 9 consultation evening about this.



## **Careers Advice**

It is vital that students are aware of all the options available to them post-16 and their choices in Year 9 play an important part in this. Our Careers staff offer advice and guidance to students on a range of issues including their plans for the future.

There are a number of ways to access high-quality careers guidance:

### FUS Careers Advisor

Careers advice is available at the Options Evening, from our careers adviser, Miss Giles.

### Our teachers

Our school is also fortunate to have over 60 graduate teaching staff who are experts in their fields, who come with a range of invaluable experience and careers knowledge. Please contact our Heads of Subject using their emails on their associated option pages where they are more than happy to advise and support you and your child.

## **Beyond GCSE**

### **The FUS Sixth Form (16-19)**

The majority of students will join the Sixth Form for two or three years to study at Advanced Level or Technical Levels (T Levels). Many continue in Higher Education after leaving school at eighteen; others proceed directly into employment/apprenticeships. Parents should be aware that students are now required to be in education/training until age 18. Some of the courses offered continue into the Sixth Form, others may be taken up in the Sixth Form. We also run an Art Foundation Course after A Levels. We are proud of our Sixth Form offer as we offer over 20 subject routes and in the most recent published league tables have the highest Value Added Sixth Form achievement in the County.

The Sixth Form Prospectus can be accessed on our Sixth Form website:

<https://sixthform.fernup.dorset.sch.uk/>

## **T-Levels**

As a regional leader in digital education, FUS is the first centre in Dorset to offer T-Level Qualifications. We begin by launching two Digital T-Level routes where students will study in new facilities in our Computing and Robotics Centre. Students will leave at 18 as qualified and experience software developers or IT support technicians ready for the world of work. For more details please see the Computer Science or Digital IT options. From September 2023 we also began to offer Education & Early Years T Level.

To see the government website on T-Levels please see: <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/>

## **Universities and Higher Education**

If your child is interested in higher education routes then there is no better place to look than the UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/>

Packed full of advice, course requirements, and information from creative and humanities degrees, to digital and science-related fields. We advise you to give this a look as in some cases GCSE choice may be important for particular routes.

## **Apprenticeships**

UCAS also provides information on certain apprenticeship routes. Apprenticeships come at many levels and in a variety of career routes. See <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/> for more info.

For further information about how to get careers advice and our outstanding careers programme go to:

<https://fernup.dorset.sch.uk/information/careers-programme/>

## How to complete the options form

Parents are required to complete their child's option choices using a Microsoft Form which must be submitted by Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January.

You have a choice of FOUR option subjects. You must choose ONE subject from each block.

To achieve the EBac we recommend that you choose two EBac subjects; one a Modern Foreign Language subject and either History or Geography. **Students must make ONE reserve choice in each block** in case subjects are not available due to timetable restrictions or small numbers opting for their first choice making the subject available to run. If subjects are over-subscribed, students' career aspirations will be taken into account along with their behaviour and attendance record.

	Block A	Block B	Block C	Block D
Ebac	Geography	French	Geography	
	History	Spanish	Spanish	
	French	History	History	
		Geography		
Non Ebac	Business Studies	Art	Art	Ethics & Philosophy
	Food & Nutrition	Business Studies	Computer Science	Health & Fitness
	Media GCSE	Health & Social Care	Drama	IT BTec
	PE	Music	Food & Nutrition	Maths Statistics
	Photography	Photography	Health & Social Care	Media BTec
	Product Design	Product Design	Product Design	
	Sociology	Textiles	Sociology	
	Textiles			

There are some restrictions with regards to subjects. Students can:

- Choose Either Computer Science GCSE or Digital IT BTEC – not both
- Choose Either Media GCSE or Media BTec– not both
- Choose Either PE GCSE or Health & Fitness (Vocational) – not both

**Students can only choose computing (Block C) and maths statistics (Block D) if they are currently in maths groups X1, X2, Y1, Y2. This is due to the high mathematical content of these courses. Please speak to your child's maths teachers if you have any queries about this.**

Details of all the courses on offer can be found on our website. These pages will give you course summaries, exam and assessment details and include a short video from the head of department.

<https://fernup.dorset.sch.uk/options-information/>

## **FAQs**

### **Parents' Questions Answered**

#### **1. What if my child is not interested in any other subject for a reserve choice?**

*We advise that you write in the comment box at the bottom to explain why, but it is important you consider this as you may not get all your first choices*

#### **2. What is the reasoning behind not having a language as a compulsory option?**

*At FUS we believe in offering a full range of choices to our students. We offer two different languages in our options allowing our students to pick up to two if they are passionate about this. If your child is a keen linguist and is interested in taking this forward, we highly recommend learning an additional language as this opens many futures options.*

#### **3. What is the school's view on the EBacc? (eg. impact on university entry)**

*Our option choice list allows students to pick EBacc combinations, which include a language, history OR geography. We strongly recommend this route for many of our students however, we believe students should have choice over their options and never force students to take these.*

#### **4. If you are considering University, is it better to do GCSE in a subject rather than BTEC/vocational?**

*If considering a certain career choice or university entry we highly advise you seek further information from our careers advisor, teachers or UCAS all these details are in the careers guidance section of the option webpage.*

**5. How will we be notified of what options have been given /granted and when will this be also will there be time from notification to GCSE course starting?**

*We will give final confirmation of options in Early Summer 1 half term just after Easter. However, before this point, many conversations led by our Curriculum Manager, Mrs. Milsom will happen with students to ensure their choices, course demand and student aspirations are considered before final decisions are made. If reserve choices are required all parents and students will be communicated with before course confirmation.*

**6. What is the difference between a vocational qualification and a GCSE qualification?**

*Vocational qualifications AND GCSEs are 'Level 2' Qualifications. Vocational qualifications generally have a higher coursework component compared to their GCSE equivalent. These courses are less academically demanding in terms of terminal or final exams. In some cases, higher university entries may not consider vocational options at GCSE, though this view is restricted to the most competitive universities like Cambridge and Oxford. Most universities accept vocational qualifications at GCSE and Sixth Form level.*

**7. PE is a core subject; do they have to pick one of the PE options too?**

*No, students do not have to pick PE as an additional subject. However, all students will get one hour a week Core PE to ensure they complete physical activity/ exercise as required by the national curriculum in our fantastic sports facilities.*

**8. How will I know if I enjoy a subject which I've not experienced yet (e.g. Business Studies or Media) Are we able to change subjects if we change our minds?**

*Students will have up to 4 academic weeks to decide whether a course is for them. If within this time they decide they may want to change, conversations will be had between them, parents and our options team. It may not be possible during this period to swap to another course which is already full so decisions need to be taken carefully in the first instance.*

*Before taking on the subject, why not talk to students who may already take it in other year groups? Or talk to the teachers who deliver it to informed as much as possible?*

**9. Where do we find out what the content of each course is?**

<https://fernup.dorset.sch.uk/options-information/>

## Scan the QR code to access the options form



A link to this form will be sent to each student's email account following the Options Evening.

<b>Subject representatives can be found in the following rooms tonight</b>			
Art	E1	History	B10
Business Studies	B12	Maths Statistics	A4
Computer Science	T1	Media BTec & GCSE	B15
Drama	B1	Music	A2
Ethics & Philosophy	B13	PE	Large Cafe
Food & Nutrition	E8	Photography	E16
French	Small cafe	Product Design	E14
Geography	B4	Sociology	B18
Health & Fitness	Large Cafe	Spanish	Small cafe
Health & Social Care	A9	Textiles	E5
Miss Giles, our careers advisor will be available in the small cafe			

## NOTES