



Dear Parent/Carer,

I recently wrote to you updating you about the Year 9 amended assessment program for this term. In that letter I introduced the Key Stage 4 Options process which is on-going this half term. This letter further outlines the options process.

Students choosing their Key Stage 4 Options is both a daunting and exciting time. For the first time in their educational career, students have the opportunity to partially select their learning pathways. For some, this will be a very simple, obvious and quick process. We know from experience that some students know exactly what they want to do and what subjects to take. We also know that there are some at the other end of scale who haven't got the faintest idea as to what to choose. Most people fall somewhere in the middle.

We are very used to having this range of responses to the options process, and despite being in a somewhat unusual position with the Covid closure, we have a program of events and opportunities to ensure that every student is supported appropriately throughout this process. This started with a launch assembly last week entitled 'My Learning Journey'. Year 9 students will have weekly assembly slots outlining the options process to advise and guide them through the process. Please encourage your child to attend every tutor time punctually so they don't miss out on the information and advice sharing. If your child is struggling to access the online tutor time, please contact the school as a matter of urgency.

It is also vital that you have a complete understanding of the options available and the process itself so you can support your child over the coming weeks. I will be writing to you with regular updates as to how the next few weeks will work, where to find key information and answering any frequently asked questions.

In this letter, there are a number of events I would like to draw your attention to.

- Friday 22nd January – Taster day for year 9 students. Lessons will be not running as per usual on this day. Students will be able to sample the different subjects on offer at Key Stage 4. More information will be released about this throughout the next few days. The subjects available can be found [here](#). It can also be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/EmmSubject2021>
- Wednesday 3rd February – Online application will open and Online information event for parents – please click [here](#) for the link to the event. It can also be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/EmmOptions2021>
- Thursday 11th February – Deadline for options submission

As these events continue, I will write to you again outlining further information and events and sharing key resources. In the meantime, please stay safe and should you have any questions around the options, please do not hesitate to contact me. Any questions around online learning should either be sent to individual subject teachers, your child's tutor or head of year.

Yours sincerely,

P Whitehouse (Assistant Headteacher)



FAQ's around the options process:

What subjects are compulsory and what are optional?

Subject	Optional/Compulsory	Qualification type
English	Compulsory	GCSE
Maths	Compulsory	GCSE
Biology	Compulsory	GCSE
Chemistry	Compulsory	GCSE
Physics	Compulsory	GCSE
Science	Compulsory	GCSE
Computer Science	Optional	GCSE
French	Optional	GCSE
Geography	Optional	GCSE
History	Optional	GCSE
3D Design	Optional	GCSE
Business	Optional	GCSE
Creative Media	Optional	BTEC
Design & Technology	Optional	GCSE
Drama	Optional	GCSE
Fine Art	Optional	GCSE
Hospitality	Optional	L1/2 Vocational award
Marketing & Enterprise	Optional	CNAT
Media	Optional	GCSE
Physical Education	Optional	GCSE
Religious Studies	Optional	GCSE
Sports Science	Optional	CNAT
Classical Civilization*	Optional	GCSE

*this course is offered as an additional qualification on top of the chosen allocation of 4. It is taught outside the standard curriculum.

How many choices do I have?

Students can choose 4 different subjects.

Are there any restrictions?

Students must choose at least one of the Ebacc subjects highlighted in grey. They can choose more than one.

Other than this, students have free choice. We will try and accommodate every single option choice, however, give the free choice, some combinations may cause clashes. We ask all students to choose a reserve subject as back up. If the combination of chosen subjects doesn't work, the reserve will be used.

How do we submit our options choices?

All options choices are submitted through our online system. A 'How to...' guide will be made available when the system goes live.



How do I make sure my child makes appropriate options choices?

We will be working with every student to advise them appropriately. We will have an entire session dedicated to 'how to make good choices'. Every student is an individual, with areas of strength and interest. We will talk about subject type (GCSE vs BTEC for example), careers pathways as well as post 16 choices (A-Levels vs Apprenticeships for example). The best support you can give is to discuss options with your child and ensure they can explain to you the reasons for their choices. You could also discuss your own option choices at this stage as well as any other family members/friends who have been through this process. I would add that successful option choices come from information gathering and question asking. It often doesn't end well if students feel detached from their options choices, however, at this age, children do need support and advice (even they do not always realise it!)

Can options be changed?

We try and ensure that the options process is thorough and rigorous enough that changes are not needed. Once Key Stage 4 courses begin, time is precious and so swaps are rare and not really allowed.

What is The EBacc (I have included an attachment to this email with further information about the Ebacc)?

The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that keeps young people's options open for further study and future careers.

The EBacc is:

- English language and literature
- Maths
- The sciences – double or triple award
- Geography or History
- a language

What are the different qualifications available?

GCSE - GCSEs are the most common and popular 2-year courses of study taken during years 10 and 11 (KS4). Almost all GCSE's involve a two-year taught course, completed by sitting a series of exams at the end of year 11.

BTEC - BTEC courses focus on skills-based learning and are designed around themed units. Rather than testing everything together at the end, BTECs are tested throughout the course using assessments based on real-life scenarios. This practical approach allows BTEC learners to demonstrate ongoing application of the knowledge and skills required.

CNAT - Cambridge Nationals are vocational qualifications, equivalent to GCSEs, for 14–16 year olds. As well as an exam, students also complete practical tasks as part of the assessment. Assessment opportunities are available across the course. Cambridge Nationals have clear progression routes to A levels, Apprenticeships or further advanced vocational qualifications at Level 3.

L1/2 Vocational award - WJEC Vocational Awards and Certificates are level 1/2 qualifications that enable learners to gain broad knowledge and understanding of a specific vocational sector. It is assessed using a combination of internal and external assessment. In addition to the development of sector specific knowledge and understanding, these qualifications also support learners to develop the essential employability skills that are valued by employers, further and higher education.

What is the difference between double award science and separate science?

The Emmbrook School



Emmbrook Road, Wokingham, RG41 1JP

Tel: (0118) 9784406

Email: enquiries@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk

Website: www.emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mr Nick McSweeney

For GCSE Science, the old single-award "science" and "additional science" options are no longer available, being replaced with a double award "combined science" option (graded on the scale 9–9 to 1–1 and equivalent to 2 GCSEs). Alternatively, students can take separate qualifications in chemistry, biology, and physics. Please talk to your science teacher about your child's individual circumstances.