

Dear parents/carers and students

I am writing to up-date you about the Programmes of Study that the new Year 12 students will be following from September 2016.

As you are aware, this is a time of unprecedented change in post-16 education and we have been carefully evaluating our own experiences of the government reforms to date and consulting with other schools both locally and nationally. The majority of schools are now narrowing their offer to a 3 A Level, two year linear programme, with no AS examinations at the end of Year 12. At Vandyke, however, we believe that many students benefit from starting four A Levels and then dropping to three at some point during Year 12 when they are clear about their preferred options. Some may wish to sit the AS examination in the subject that they are dropping and this will be possible in most subjects but not all, (please see below).

Programmes of Study at Vandyke from September 2016

Students may choose one of the following Programmes of Study

- **4 A Levels.** This would only be recommended in exceptional cases as the workload over two years might dilute the quality of grades achieved. Most universities including Oxford and Cambridge are more interested in the quality of grades not the quantity and make offers based on three A Levels not 4.
- **4 A Levels dropping to 3 at the end of Year 12.** Students will sit an AS in the subject they are dropping in the summer of Year 12 where this is possible. See below.
- **4 A Levels dropping to 3 at some point during Year 12 before March.** Students will not sit an AS in the subject they are dropping and will concentrate solely on their 3 preferred A Levels.
- **3 A Levels.**
- **A mixed programme of BTec courses and A Levels to a maximum of 3 subjects.** It may be possible and desirable for students to complete a regular work experience placement in one of their vocational subjects.
- **3 BTec courses and a compulsory work experience**

Unreformed Subjects

The national A Level reforms are not yet complete and there are some unreformed subjects where students will continue to sit AS examinations at the end of Year 12 as this is a requirement of the course. These subjects are:

Maths, Further Maths, Finance, Law, Food Technology, Product Design, Media Studies



Reformed Subjects

If you choose to study four subjects and aim to drop one at the end of Year 12 it will not be possible to sit an AS examination in the following subjects:

French, Geography, English Language and English Literature

This is because the focus of assessment in the AS and A Level examinations are very different in these subjects and preparing students for an AS examination might compromise their A Level preparations. This is not the case in other subjects.

Vocational Courses

Some vocational subjects are two year courses and students must complete the whole course to achieve a qualification. This means that if they decide to drop this subject at the end of Year 12 there is no qualification available. These courses are:

Child Development, Sport, Health and Social Care

The following vocational courses can be a one year or two year course.

Applied Science, Commercial Music and Travel and Tourism

This means that students can choose to drop these courses at the end of Year 12 and still achieve the equivalent of an AS qualification provided they have successfully finished the required coursework and passed the examination component of the course.

Challenging times

These are challenging times for schools, students and parents. However, at Vandyke we will always place the needs of individual students at the heart of our decisions. The personalised programmes of study that we have created allow all students to find the right path for them. A 'one size fits all' approach might be convenient for schools but is unlikely to meet the needs of all students.

As ever I am happy to discuss your son/daughter's programme in the light of these changes. Please don't hesitate to contact me.

With every good wish

Sean Downey

Director of Sixth Form
Assistant Headteacher