

UPPER COLLEGE
INFORMATION AND
CURRICULUM

Learning & Enquiry



CHELTEMHAM
COLLEGE

2027



"If you want to do well, this is the school that will help you do even better. Regardless of whether it is academic achievement, Sport, Music, Drama."

Current Parent

Welcome to the Upper College



The Sixth Form (referred to as Upper College) at Cheltenham College is a vibrant community of over 300 boarding and day pupils in Lower Sixth (Year 12) and Upper Sixth (Year 13). Nearly all our Fifth Form (Year 11) pupils move into our Lower Sixth after GCSEs and are joined by many new pupils from across the UK and beyond. With 30 different subjects and choices of qualifications, pupils have plenty of options to find what suits them best as an individual; and the dedicated Careers and Higher Education staff ensure that they are fully prepared for life beyond school.

Contents

03	Upper College Programme
04	Careers and Higher Education
06	Art & Design: Fine Art
07	Art & Design: Textile Design
08	Biology
09	Business
11	Chemistry
12	Classical Civilisation
13	Computer Science
14	Design & Technology Product Design
16	Drama and Theatre Studies
17	Economics
18	English Literature
19	Geography
20	History
21	History of Art
22	Information Technology
23	Latin and Greek
24	Mathematics and Further Mathematics
25	Modern Languages
26	Music
27	Philosophy
28	Physics
29	Politics
30	Psychology
32	Sports Science
33	Sport and Physical Activity
34	Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)
35	Floreat
35	English as an Additional Language (EAL)
36	Learning Support

Upper College Programme

At Cheltenham College, pupils are offered A Levels as well as BTECs or Cambridge Technicals in some subjects. In the UK, the main Sixth Form qualification is A Levels. These are linear qualifications, which means that the course culminates in public examinations in the Summer Term of Upper Sixth. To ensure pupils are fully prepared for this experience, pupils take robust, high-stakes internal examinations during the Lower Sixth year and there are 'mock' A Level exams after Christmas in the Upper Sixth.

The BTEC and Cambridge Technical offer pupils more vocationally-focused qualifications than A Levels, which directly prepare them for the professional world. Comprising a significant coursework element, as well as the opportunity to sit (and re-sit) examination units throughout Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth, the BTEC and Cambridge Technical are also more accessible for some pupils. Both are regarded by universities and employers as equivalent to A Level and so support access to higher education and future careers.

Cheltenham College offers BTEC or Cambridge Technical in Business, Sport, Information Technology and Applied Psychology. All of these can be studied as single subjects alongside two A Levels.

The Sixth Form Curriculum

Pupils in the Lower Sixth pursue one of two options:

- Study three A Levels (or equivalent) and complete an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
- Study four A Levels (or equivalent).

Some pupils taking four A Levels may also decide to complete the EPQ.

Subject Choice

Pupils should choose the subjects they enjoy most and in which they have the best chance of achieving high grades. Our primary focus is that pupils achieve three good grades which will enable them to attend their first-choice university. There are some higher education courses that require pupils to attain certain A Levels, and our Higher Education and Careers Team talk through this with each pupil.

GCSE Grades

When making subject choices, pupils should consider their strengths at GCSE. These grades are a good indicator of ability and should help guide subject choice. In general, the minimum requirement for pursuing a subject at A Level is a Grade 6 or B at GCSE, either in the subject itself or in a closely related one. Certain subjects have higher entry requirements; these are indicated, where applicable. If pupils are not sure they have the required minimum GCSE performance, they can discuss this with the relevant Head of Department before making their choices.

The EPQ and learning beyond the curriculum

The Extended Project Qualification develops a range of sophisticated research and project management skills which prepare pupils superbly for university level study. Pupils work independently, within small supervision groups led by a designated mentor, to research and produce a dissertation or practical artefact in an area of personal interest beyond the confines of the syllabus. All pupils taking three A Levels undertake the EPQ, which is submitted at the end of the Spring Term of Lower Sixth.

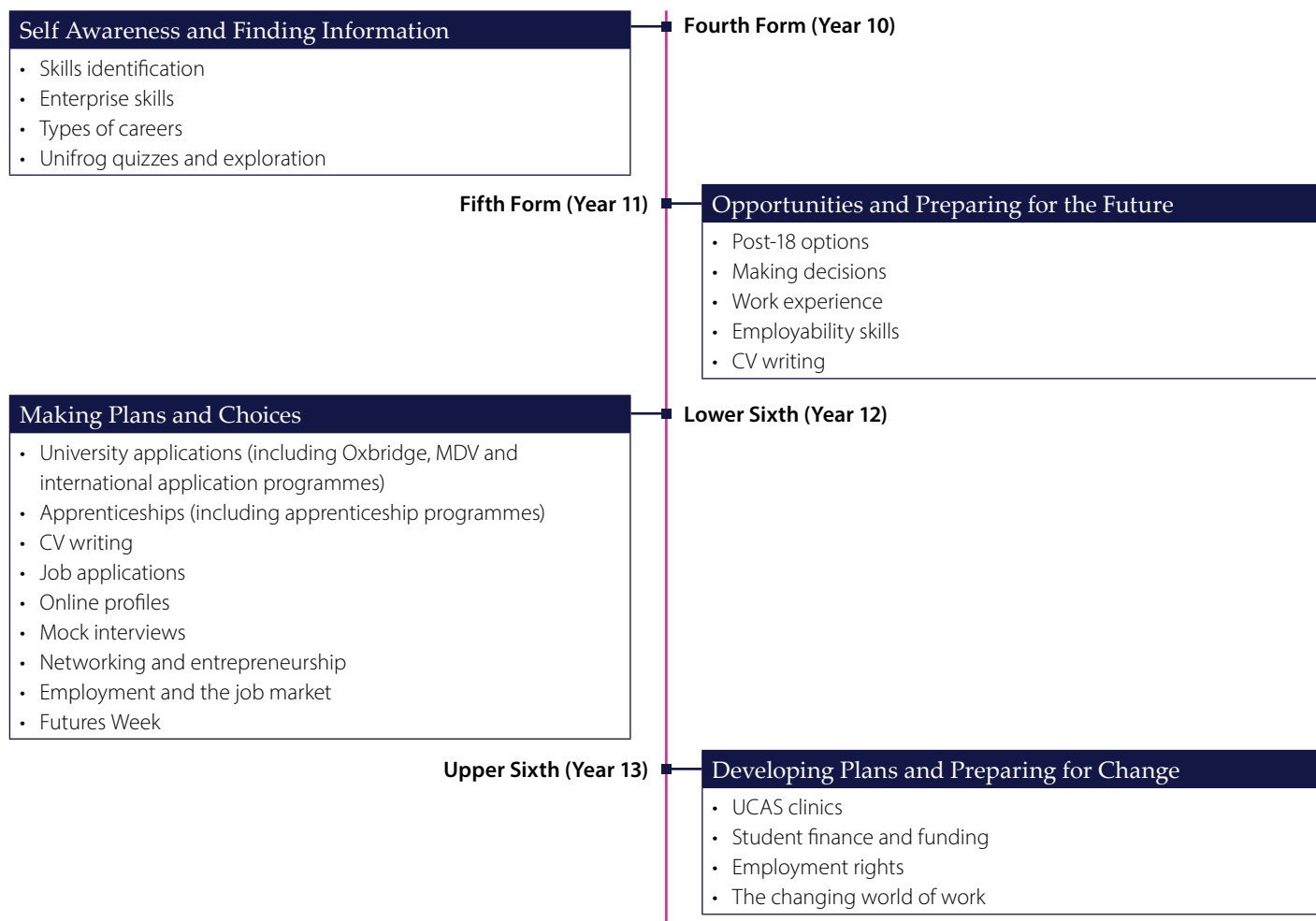
Upper College pupils benefit from an extensive supra-curricular academic enrichment programme, which comprises everything from specialist subject societies and visiting speakers, through to vocationally orientated initiatives such as our 'Mini-MBA' course.

Careers and Higher Education

Appetite & Ambition

The Careers and Higher Education Team give advice on whatever routes a pupil is considering after their Sixth Form studies. Careers guidance and personal skills development are central aspects of a pupil's education at Cheltenham, with more time dedicated to this from the Fourth Form onwards. The department has purpose built offices, a meeting room, and a specialist library of resources – based next to the main Library. With a Sixth Form of over 300 pupils, Cheltenham College handles a large and diverse range of university, apprenticeship and employment applications and has a great deal of experience (and success) in placing pupils at their first choice destination.

Overview of Careers Programme



University

Over 95% of our pupils apply to university every year.

Cheltenham College has an excellent history in placing applicants at the higher tier universities, with Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Leeds, London, Manchester, Nottingham, and Oxford being some of the destinations each year.

Our annual Futures Week at the end of Lower Sixth provides every pupil with the opportunity to practice face to face interview techniques with business leaders. In the Lower Sixth pupils take part in UCAS application workshops, a university subject department day, inspiring talks and interactive sessions on cooking at university – these help our pupils understand undergraduate life.

Overseas Universities

Cheltenham College has a strong successful track record of pupils receiving offers and/or scholarships from international universities. This is supported by an in-depth programme to prepare pupils for university places around the world. With the advice from our Overseas University co-ordinator, and using research materials and contacts at overseas universities, pupils can find their best possible fit for both the university course and location.

David Hawkins of 'The University Guys' – an expert in the field of global applications – regularly visits the College and gives guest talks in this area, alongside one-to-one College counseling meetings with pupils and parents. Annual visitors to College also include representatives from the University of British Columbia, Morehead-Cain Scholar Alumnus from the UNC, Chapel Hill and Sporting Elite (who guide pupils through the USA sports scholarships recruitment process).

Art Foundation Courses

For creative courses, some universities require pupils to take the Foundation Diploma in Art and Design thereby giving them the opportunity to explore techniques and materials outside the confines of the A Level syllabus. We support pupils to build their portfolio before applying to courses such as Fine Art, Sculpture, Costume Design, Graphic Design or other creative courses.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships, particularly degree apprenticeships, are becoming increasingly popular as an alternative to gaining a degree at university through the traditional route.

Visits from local businesses to discuss what qualities they look for in employees supports the Apprenticeship Application Programme and helps the pupils to understand the employers' perspective. Mock interviews along with practice Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) and CV and application writing workshops ensure that pupils are as prepared as possible.

Careers

The Careers Team assist pupils in preparing CVs, creating LinkedIn profiles and understanding how to succeed and best prepare for assessment centres and interviews. Throughout the year pupils are invited to half-termly career talks from professionals, including a number of Old Cheltonians who return to College to speak about a variety of different sectors.

Our termly networking suppers and career carousels are a wonderful opportunity for pupils to spend time with industry experts, to gain a real understanding of the industry and create connections.

Oxbridge

Every year several Cheltenham College pupils continue their studies at Oxbridge. If a pupil decides that they would like to apply for a place at Oxbridge, they receive dedicated support overseen by the Oxbridge Co-ordinator who runs the Oxbridge programme.

Pupils receive guidance on aptitude and admissions tests, mock interview practice, and Q&A sessions with Old Cheltonians alongside visits to Oxbridge colleges.

Medical, Dentistry and Veterinary Science Degrees

With applications to university to study Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science (MDV) increasing nationally year on year, this continues to be a highly competitive option for pupils.

Work with the MDV applicants begins in the Spring Term of Lower Sixth with weekly sessions that focus on entrance exam preparation for UCAT. A feature of the programme is an intense UCAT workshop held in June when pupils will be planning to sit their entrance tests.

The focus for the Upper Sixth is interview practice with visiting medical and veterinary students and practitioners. The programme is also suitable for any Sixth Form pupil considering patient-facing roles in healthcare such as Physiotherapy, Nursing or Radiotherapy.

Art & Design: Fine Art

Form & Function

Fine Art A Level

The Art & Design Department is a vibrant and exciting place to be. We promote a secure and respectful environment where pupils develop a life-long love of visual expression. Fine Art A Level is suited to pupils who enjoy individual voice and thought. The aim is to develop skills, creative curiosity and problem solving, creating a breadth of visual work in a department burgeoning with individuality.

The department is well equipped with specialist fine art materials and clays, easels, a photography studio, iPads and Apple Pens, projectors, printing presses, kilns, a potter's wheel, as well as a dedicated Art Library. Pupils explore and develop skills in painting and drawing, ceramics, with some venturing into glass fusing, installation, soundscaping, photography, printmaking, film making, resin and plaster. Annual visits to museums and galleries and talks led by artists and universities, inspire and enrich the pupil experience and curriculum. Weekly life drawing sessions are integral to the course, and our open studio evenings enable pupils to work independently on developing their studies and style.

In Fine Art pupils are provided with an increased intensity of study and are introduced to a variety of concepts, processes and techniques which become more intrinsic to their own practice. Pupils learn about both traditional and contemporary practice and media, developing individual skills to suit.

The process of art-making is organic and an evolving journey, where pupils are led by their own ideas and creative responses. They are encouraged to take ownership of their work and as their ideas develop, they will encounter and choose from a wide range of approaches, working across painting, drawing, three-dimensional processes, ceramics, digital media, and printmaking, with their work and ideas guiding their direction across these media.

Pupils are exposed to relevant images, artists, artefacts and resources from the past and from recent times, in an increasingly bespoke and individually presented programme. Historical and contextual studies of art are embedded throughout the course and contribute to developing opinions about and reflections of the world around us.

Pupils are expected to demonstrate appreciation and understanding of pictorial space, composition, rhythm, scale, structure and colour, line, tone, texture, shape and form. This is integral to the investigating and making processes reflected in insights and research in practical and critical activities, demonstrating understanding of different styles, genres and traditions.

For Fine Art, assessment is divided between two components: component one is worth 60% and is coursework based, including a portfolio and independent essay, and component two is worth 40% and is an externally set assignment.

Recommended reading

Recommended reading:

Ways of Seeing by John Berger

On Photography by Susan Sontag

The story of Art without Men

by Katy Hessel

On Photographs by David Company

The Oxford Dictionary of Art

The Story of Art (free download)

tate.org.uk

www.archive.org

Course offered

AQA Art and Design (Fine Art) A Level
(7202)

Art & Design: Textile Design

Mark & Measure

Textiles A Level

Textile Design is a creative and versatile subject that focuses on designing and making fabrics for different uses. It covers areas such as fashion, art and interior design. Pupils will explore materials, techniques, and processes to develop ideas for clothing, accessories, home furnishings, and decorative pieces. Advances in textile technology, such as fireproof and waterproof fabrics, will also be explored.

Drawing is essential in Textile Design. Pupils will use traditional and digital techniques to develop ideas, record observations, and create finished designs. They will also learn about digital tools like embroidery and fabric printing software to enhance their creative work.

Pupils study textiles in historical and modern contexts, taking inspiration from galleries, exhibitions, fashion shows, and nature. Sustainability and ethical sourcing are key considerations, as well as understanding current trends in fashion and textiles.

“If you study fashion and textiles, you will unveil a world where creativity becomes a tangible expression. Textiles is a dynamic and exciting field. It offers a wealth of opportunities. It is best suited for individuals with a passion for creativity and innovation. From fashion design to technical textiles, the textile design industry is evolving.”

Sarah Tradgett, Head of Art & Design

We encourage pupils to take part in the global JUNK KOUTURE project, Young Fashion Designer of the Year and we have industry links with Superdry and Mulberry. There will be visits to exhibitions and galleries locally and nationally such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

What does the course cover?

Pupils will explore one or more of the following disciplines:

Textiles for Interiors: Creating fabrics for furniture, wallpapers, and soft furnishings using techniques like weaving, embroidery, and digital printing.

Art Textiles: Using textiles as an expressive medium through mixed media, wall hangings, and installations.

Fashion Textiles: Developing ideas for clothing, including fabric manipulation, embellishment, and garment construction.

The course is structured to cover the four Assessment Objectives listed below for both the coursework and exam units:

- Contextual Research
- Experimentation
- Observational
- Personal Responses Assessment

The course is made of two different units:

Unit 1: Coursework - pupils will work through two linked projects leading up to the mock exam, and will produce a sustained outcome for each. This part of the course is

60% of the final grade. There will also be a linked Personal Study which comprises of 1,000 words minimum, which will be 12% of the total qualification.

Unit 2: Externally set assignment, this is a project that will be carried out in the final Spring Term and Summer Term of the course. The theme for this project is set by the exam board, pupils will prepare for a 15 hour timed outcome which will take place around the Easter break.

Tasks out of College will be based on the pupil's current projects and will build on the lesson work they have been producing. This may include drawing, research, planning, analysis and evaluation tasks. These tasks contribute to their final grade and should be completed to the best of the pupil's ability.

Future Pathways

This course encourages creativity, problem-solving, and innovation, preparing pupils for further study or careers in the textile and fashion industries. Past pupils have accessed international design establishments such as Parsons and top Universities including Edinburgh, Loughborough and London College of Fashion to study courses in Fashion, Textile Design and Costume. As well as using it to support them accessing other non related subject courses.

Recommended reading

Vogue
Selvedge
Drapers
Harpers Bizarre

Course offered

Pearson Edexcel A Level Art & Design
Textile Design (9TE0)

Biology

Enzymes & Ecosystems

“Self-motivated pupils take pride in their studies. They work confidently and independently to explore wider contexts through their own research.”

Independent Schools Inspectorate, 2026

Biology A Level

Biological research and understanding are progressing at a rapid rate making it a fascinating subject to study, with an ever developing curriculum. Since the turn of the millennium, the world has seen the complete sequencing of the human genome, advances in the therapeutic use of stem cells and further analysis to explain climate change.

Biology is an excellent choice for those pursuing Medicine and other healthcare related degrees, Veterinary Science, Dentistry, Biochemistry, Environmental Science and Pharmacy. Biology also makes an excellent choice alongside a broader range of subjects, such as Geography, Psychology, History or Languages, because the skills of analysis and application are of great use in certain areas of law, politics, business and journalism.

Biologists are encouraged to attend evening Science Society events and participate in events run by the Royal Society of Biology, including the Biology Olympiad, Nancy Rothwell Biological Drawing competitions and the Photography competition. Sixth Form Biologists compete to be part of an editorial team who write and publish a school Biology magazine once a year. The title of this magazine, *Discovery*, comes from the name of one of the expeditions Old Cheltonian Dr E. A. Wilson (1872-1912) took to Antarctica with Scott and Shackleton.

Recommended reading

Bad Science by Ben Goldacre

The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins

I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grander View of Life

by Ed Young

Why Geese Don't Get Obese

by Eric Wildmaier

What does the course cover?

In the Lower Sixth pupils gain a detailed understanding of cell structure, biological molecules, disease, immunology, biodiversity, evolution and classification. In the Upper Sixth, advanced biochemistry is studied with specific reference to photosynthesis and cell respiration. Pupils study the coordination of the human body, using both the nervous system and hormonal control and advanced genetics. This year covers the latest scientific advances including epigenetics and microbiology.

There is a strong practical focus, which is integrated throughout both years. This includes the opportunity to develop new practical skills, including microbiology and gel electrophoresis, and to carry out ecology in the field. Pupils keep a lab book which will evidence core practical skills. This Practical Endorsement is given a Pass or Fail grade as required by the A Level specification.

The examination is at the end of the two-year course. There are three examination papers, one of which assesses all aspects of the syllabus synoptically.

This includes the experiments undertaken over the two-year course.

Course offered

OCR Biology A Level (Specification A H420)

GCSE grade required

Grade 7 in Biology or 7/7 Double Award and grade 6 in Mathematics

Business

Risk & Reward

Business A Level

Business is a dynamic and engaging subject that throws pupils into the heart of large and small organisations across the globe. The course provides a superb grounding for those considering a business related course at undergraduate level, or who are interested in launching their own business ideas, by introducing them to all aspects of how a business works. Pupils look at the interactions of different business functions, from marketing and human resources, through to finance and operations to see how these vital areas interlink to help businesses to function and thrive.

Pupils are encouraged to engage with real world examples and case studies to further their understanding. This is complemented with visiting speakers, an opportunity to participate in the Mini-MBA Elective programme and trips to local businesses to bring the theory to life.

What does the course cover?

The course is set up to explain how businesses are formed, from start-up through to becoming a global enterprise. This helps pupils learn how and why firms grow and how success can depend upon a range of internal as well as external variables. Pupils focus on marketing, finance, human resources and operations to understand the internal strengths and weaknesses of businesses, as well as considering the opportunities and threats that arise from the external, macro-environment.

Assessment is 100% exam based, with a mix of final assessment methods including multiple choice questions, short answer questions, data responses and longer essays. There are three examinations, each lasting two hours.

Recommended reading

Deep Sea and Foreign Going: Inside Shipping, the Invisible Industry That Brings You 90% of Everything

by Rose George

The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon by Brad Stone

Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead by Sheryl Sandberg

The Virgin Way: How to Listen, Learn, Laugh and Lead by Richard Branson

Course offered

AQA Business A Level (7132)

GCSE grade required

Grade 6 in Mathematics

“The business world is one which is forever shifting and evolving. Studying Business allows you to follow these developments and develop skills and insight that will allow you to become a part of it, should you wish.”

Paulina De La Fuente, Head of Business

Business Cambridge Technical Level 3 Extended Certificate

The option to study the OCR Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate in Business is a more vocational programme, assessed largely through coursework and is equivalent to a full A Level. It offers a flexible, unit-based structure with project-based assessments. It develops the practical, interpersonal and thinking skills required to be able to succeed in higher education and business careers. This includes the ability to learn independently, research actively and give presentations. The course provides a solid grounding in business planning, finance, marketing and strategy which will be invaluable when embarking on further study, an entrepreneurial venture, or a future professional career.

It is suited to those who enjoy coursework or who would benefit from an opportunity to be able to retake an exam, as this more modular approach allows for this. A genuine interest in business and current affairs will really help bring the course to life.

What does the course cover?

The course includes five units of which three are mandatory and two are optional. Two of the mandatory units are assessed externally via examinations; the remaining three units are assessed internally through coursework, which is marked and externally moderated.

Possible units include:

- the business environment
- working in business
- customers and communication
- marketing and market research
- human resources.

Pupils who choose this course must have a genuine interest in how businesses function and an ability to manage regular deadlines to satisfy the requirements of the continual assessment in the course. As with the A Level, a good level of spoken and written English is necessary for success.

Recommended reading

Bounce: The Myth of Talent and the Power of Practice by Matthew Syed
How Google Works by Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg
The Apple Revolution: Steve Jobs, the counterculture and how the crazy ones took over the world by Luke Dormehl

Course offered

OCR Cambridge Technical Level 3

Chemistry

Solutions & Reactions

Chemistry A Level

As the central science, Chemistry connects the biological and physical worlds. Chemistry is at the forefront, tackling issues such as global energy demands, potable water scarcity, food for a growing population and the development of innovative medicines. At a basic level, Chemistry describes how one set of substances can be converted into another set of substances. Chemistry is the science that investigates the structure, properties and interactions of matter; Chemistry has a bearing on everything that goes on around us.

The A Level course equips pupils with a detailed knowledge of modern chemistry allowing them to understand processes occurring around them in everyday life. For those interested in medicine, dentistry or veterinary sciences Chemistry A Level must be taken. This course is an excellent A Level when taken alongside Mathematics, Physics and Biology. Equally, it is also an excellent complementary subject to English, Classics, Art and the Humanities.

Outside the confines of the course, pupils can take part in The Chemistry Olympiad, The Chemistry Race, C3L6 and RSC's Young Analyst. They can also visit the Chemistry Laboratory at the University of Bristol and synthesise benzocaine and isolate caffeine from tea.

What does the course cover?

The A Level course builds on the skills and technical aspects of IGCSE.

- In the Lower Sixth Form pupils study an introduction to organic, physical and inorganic chemistry. Topics covered include atomic and electronic structure, chemical amounts, bonding and structure, equilibrium, energy and basic organic chemistry concepts.
- In the Upper Sixth pupils build upon what they have previously studied taking organic, physical and inorganic chemistry to an advanced level. Topics covered include rates of reaction, redox, pH, free energy, synthesis, mechanism and analytical techniques.

Practical work is central to any excellent chemical education; there will be opportunities for practical activities most weeks and demonstrations during most lessons. Pupils are required to learn specific practical skills and to apply these competently in the laboratory. Pupils report experiments and analysis of results in a laboratory notebook that provide the evidence for the development of skills. There is an examination at the end of the two-year course which includes three examination papers, one of which assesses all the aspects of the course synoptically.

Recommended reading

Periodic Tales

by Hugh Aldersley- Williams

Elegant Solutions by Philip Ball

Seven Elements That Have Changed

The World by John Browne

What is Chemistry? by Peter Atkins

Course offered

OCR Chemistry A Level (H432)

GCSE grade required

Grade 7 in Chemistry or 7/7 Double Award and grade 7 in Mathematics

Classical Civilisation

Cultures & Customs

“Classical Civilisation offers a broad insight into the lives, monuments and myths of the ancient Mediterranean world.”

Lizzie Rawkins, Head of Classics

Classical Civilisation A Level

Classical Civilisation is the study of the Ancient World entirely in English. Course aims:

- to gain a broad understanding and insight into the classical world
- to develop awareness of how the ancient world reflects modern day issues, such as questions of gender, belief, sexuality and citizenship
- to develop transferable skills of analysis, evaluation and written argument

The civilisations of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East hold an enormous influence over the modern Western world through the cultures they created and left behind. Studying Classical Civilisation offers a unique, accessible and broad window into these ancient worlds. The course allows pupils to study the past through a wide range of sources, ranging from beautiful sculptures and majestic temples to heartfelt love poetry and brutal accounts of wars and appreciate both our cultural heritage and the achievements of ancient people.

The Classics Department comprises six specialist teachers and six classrooms situated in a historic part of the central Quad. A rotating programme of annual lectures, competitions and trips is complemented by the lively pupil led Classics Society, featuring games, quizzes and talks by pupils and staff at twice-termly evening events.

Recommended reading

Circe by Madelaine Miller

Classical Thought by Terence Irwin

Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves

by Sarah Pomeroy

Ancient Greece: The Greatest Show on Earth (2013 BBC TV series)

The History of Rome

(a podcast by Mike Duncan)

What does the course cover?

The course splits into three components, each examined by an individual paper that combines shorter analysis of visual or written sources with extended thematic essay writing.

- The first component, The World of the Hero, is taught across both Lower and Upper Sixth. Pupils study the epic poetry of Homer and Virgil, studying the narratives and characters of works such as the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* alongside the values and lives of the ancient world, from attitudes to women to reflections on imperial propaganda.
- The second component involves the study of culture and the arts; pupils study theatre, the foundations of modern Western drama. As well as reading great works of Greek tragedy such as Sophocles' *Oedipus* or bawdy political comedy like Aristophanes' *Frogs*, pupils also use material evidence from surviving pottery and architecture to put together a picture of the civic role of drama.
- The third component, on Beliefs and Ideas, involves an in-depth study of Greek religion. While many are familiar with the Olympian gods, the course also involves study of mysterious cults, majestic sanctuaries and the philosophical thinking of those who dared to challenge orthodox religious belief.

Course offered

OCR Classical Civilization A Level (H408)

GCSE grade required

Grade 6 in an essay-based subject is recommended

Computer Science

Logic & Code

Computer Science

A-Level Computer Science is a powerful and relevant qualification in a world shaped by automation, data, and artificial intelligence. It equips students, whether they're aspiring to careers in technology, medicine, law, business, or the creative industries, with a deep understanding of how modern systems operate and influence society. Students explore how technology shapes behaviour, decision-making, and global systems, while also engaging with ethical, legal, and environmental questions surrounding AI, automation, privacy, and the future of work. In this sense, Computer Science is both technical and philosophical, encouraging students to question how technology should be designed, governed, and used.

The course develops a problem-solving mindset, focusing on breaking complex challenges into manageable parts, understanding how systems make decisions, and analysing how data can be used to inform outcomes. These skills underpin modern AI and large-scale digital systems. Students learn not only to create technology, but to evaluate and question it, developing a critical form of digital literacy essential in the 21st century.

The subject rewards logical thinking, curiosity and persistence rather than rote learning or advanced mathematics. Students learn through investigation, experimentation and refinement, building confidence as they tackle challenging concepts and develop independent solutions. These habits of thought are transferable, future-proof and highly valued by universities and employers alike.

Students study computational thinking, algorithms, programming, data representation, computer systems, networking, databases, and ethical issues. Assessment includes two written examinations.

Paper 1 Computer Systems assesses knowledge, understanding, and application of the theory concepts within the course.

Paper 2 Algorithms and programming assesses elements of computational thinking, problem solving skills, and use of common algorithms.

There is an independent programming project (20%). In the project, students identify a real problem, design and develop a solution, and evaluate its effectiveness, preparing them for further study and modern careers.

Recommended reading

A Programmer's Guide to Computer Science by Dr William M. Springer II
Philosophy through Computer Science by Daniel Lim

Code Complete: A Practical Handbook of Software Construction by Steve McConnell

The Pattern on the Stone by W. Daniel Hillis

Hello World: How to Be Human in the Age of the Machine by Hannah Fry

Course offered

OCR Computer Science A Level (H446)

Design & Technology (D&T)

Creativity & Innovation

Product Design A Level

We are surrounded by products which make our lives easier in so many ways, but are you interested in how they are produced, the technology which gives them a competitive edge, their aesthetic influences, how they could be improved and what happens to them at the end of their life?

The A Level Product Design course aims to answer these questions, giving pupils an appreciation and understanding of the man-made environment we live in. Those who choose this course should have a strong interest in designing, problem solving, modelling, making and evaluating products and production systems.

Cheltenham College offers an extremely well equipped design and manufacturing facility which embraces traditional manufacturing and modern CAD/ CAM equipment. This enables pupils to design and construct products from a wide range of traditional and modern materials. This is combined with very experienced DT staff who have extensive knowledge of both design education and industry. Specifically, within the department Cheltenham College has 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC routers, a dedicated CAD room, combined with traditional workshops and a hot metal area.

During the course pupils embark on a variety of design projects, however they are also welcome and encouraged to undertake their own projects during any free time. On top of this we offer a variety of trips and visits to manufacturing facilities such as the BMW Mini plant, Morgan Cars and Castings UK.

What does the course cover?

The course itself is a 50:50 split examination and coursework. The written examination looks at materials, manufacturing techniques, industrial manufacturing and a range of design theory elements such as design movements, ergonomics and anthropometrics. The coursework involves creating the brief for a commercially viable product which pupils research and develop through to a fully working prototype, which will in turn be tested and evaluated.

The exam topics and the skills required for the coursework are taught through a mixture of theory lessons and a variety of focussed practical tasks, during the Lower Sixth year. Most of the Upper Sixth is devoted to the coursework with the completion of some theory topics. By the end of the course pupils are confident working in wood, metal and plastic and have a sound knowledge of CAD and CAM manufacture. This enables those who choose this course to construct with confidence their final coursework piece.

Recommended reading

Against the Odds by James Dyson

Invention: A Life by James Dyson

The Design of Everyday Things

by Don Norman

Product Design and Development

by Karl Ulrich

Inside the Factory BBC

Course offered

Pearson Edexcel Design & Technology A Level Product design (9DT0)



"I found that the teachers have helped me the most academically by pushing me outside of my comfort zone to reach my fullest potential. Most importantly, academic societies are the best place to further your understanding by encouraging important discussions about the subjects and its influence in the modern world. It is also a great place to ask questions that you are unable to ask in a classroom environment."

Ngoni

Drama and Theatre Studies

Romeo & Juliet

Drama and Theatre Studies A Level

This course inspires pupils to become independent theatre makers with the skills they need to go on to higher education, whether that is to study a course in Drama and Theatre or another subject.

This qualification emphasises practical creativity alongside research and theoretical understanding. Pupils learn through experience, seeing theatre and making theatre for themselves. There is a wide range of theatrical styles and contexts introduced as pupils explore plays practically, devise and work on performances.

At Cheltenham, there is a suite of specialist rooms, a black box theatre, a dance studio and dedicated classrooms for teaching. Beyond the classroom there are opportunities to take part in workshops from visiting practitioners and attend numerous live performances both locally and in the West End.

What does the course cover?

The AQA Drama and Theatre course is divided into three components.

- Drama and Theatre is an open book exam, which includes the study of two texts and analysis and evaluation of a live theatre performance. As part of this unit, pupils practically explore the texts in performance including opportunities for all aspects of design and write from the perspective of a designer, a director, or a performer.
- Creating Original Drama involves the group devising of a piece of theatre influenced by the work a major practitioner. This is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.
- Making Theatre involves the practical exploration and interpretation of three scripted extracts from three contrasting plays, which culminates in an externally examined performance of one of these extracts.

Both practical units also involve the writing of assessed coursework. This is a highly practical course, which will rarely see pupils sitting in the classroom as content is taught through group work, discussion and practical workshops.

“Theatre is the most immediate and most dynamic of all art forms, giving a voice to the voiceless.”

Sian McBride, Head of Theatre Studies

Recommended reading

A Director's Handbook

by Katie Mitchell

An Actor Prepares by Stanislavski

Playwright's Podcast – Royal Court Theatre

Theatre Podcast – Shakespeare Globe

Course offered

AQA Drama and Theatre A Level (7262)

Economics

Analysis & Evaluation

“The study of A Level Economics helps young people better understand the world around them.”

Paulina De La Fuente, Head of Economics

Economics A Level

Economics is not just about numbers and the stock market. It is the study of the world around us from a social, financial, environmental and cultural perspective. Economics is always topical – whatever the breaking news story on the front of the Financial Times, an understanding of economics provides an appreciation of its significance. Being a global subject, Economics feeds transferable knowledge, analytical and evaluative skills that can be applied to future study, work or home life.

The Economics department aims to run annual trips along with the Business department, alternating between Frankfurt and Cuba in recent years. The two departments also share access to guest speakers, societies and elective courses in Lower Sixth (the Mini-MBA and the CISL: Fundamentals of Financial Services Qualification).

Considered a social science, Economics is a highly regarded academic field of study and suits ambitious pupils who have a genuine interest in current affairs. It is essential that those who choose to study Economics have sound numeracy skills and the ability to write balanced essays. There is rarely a right answer in Economics, but any argument put forward must be backed up by quantitative evidence. Pupils at Cheltenham enjoy the subject because it allows them to employ and develop analytical and evaluative skills.

What does the course cover?

The course is divided between microeconomics and macroeconomics. Microeconomics is the study of how individuals and companies make decisions to allocate scarce resources. This section of the course helps to understand how prices are formed in markets ranging from oil to labour. Macroeconomics is the study of the whole economy, with a focus on how to grow a stable economy that is free from disruptive price or exchange rate movements, unemployment, inequality and uncertainty.

At the end of the Upper Sixth, assessment is taken via three two-hour exam papers: microeconomics, macroeconomics and synoptic (a combination of micro and macro theory).

Economics can lead to a wide range of careers in economics and finance-related professions, including accountancy, actuarial analyst, data analyst, economist, finance and banking, government advisor, stockbroker or journalism.

Recommended reading

Economics: The User's Guide: A Pelican Introduction by Ha-Joon Chang
The Undercover Economist
 by Tim Harford
The Almighty Dollar by Dharshini David
The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It by Paul Collier
More or Less – a podcast by Tim Harford

Course offered

Edexcel Economics A Level
GCSE grade required
 Grade 7 in Mathematics

English Literature

Chapter & Verse

English Literature A Level

What is literature all about? In his novel *The Sense of an Ending*, the writer Julian Barnes puts it like this: great literature is about “love, sex, morality, friendship, happiness, suffering, betrayal, adultery, good and evil, heroes and villains, guilt and innocence, ambition, power, justice, revolution, war, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, the individual against society, success and failure, murder, suicide, death, God.”

Studying English Literature at A Level is the opportunity to engage with the centuries-long endeavour of generations of great writers: to capture the breadth and diversity of what it means to be a human being.

Through the English Literature A Level, we develop enthusiastic and insightful readers of literature and pupils who express themselves fluently in writing. To complement our Sixth Form class teaching, there are regular sessions of our Literary Society (LitSoc). This group supports those who are considering an English degree and to nurture literary passions.

Alongside the course we run regular trips, including Cheltenham Literature Festival, Stratford-upon-Avon and London. We also invite authors and academics to Cheltenham College to give a fresh perspective on the texts that pupils are studying. English Literature is a versatile A Level that works well in combination with almost any other subject, enhancing pupils' subject portfolios with its cultural richness, academic rigor and, of course, its nationwide reputation as a top calibre qualification.

What does the course cover?

At Cheltenham, we follow the OCR A Level English Literature course. Pupils encounter a wide range of texts from the 16th-21st century and develop skills in close analysis, comparative judgement and the evaluation of the significance of biographical, historical and social contexts.

The precise texts studied by each class are selected by their teachers, but it can be expected to study a play by William Shakespeare (usually *Hamlet* or *Coriolanus*),

a collection of, or extended form of, poetry (choices have included the work of Christina Rossetti and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in recent years) and another drama text (*A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, for example) in preparation for the Paper 1 exam.

In contrast, Paper 2 is a wide-ranging genre study of a particular type of literature. For this exam, pupils study two novels linked to a choice of topics including American Literature (1880-1940), The Gothic, or Dystopian Literature. In the Upper Sixth, pupils will complete two coursework essays on a selection of 20th and 21st century texts. Choices in recent years have included *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett, *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes, *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier, and *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath.

Recommended reading

A Short Introduction to Shakespeare's

Tragedies by Stanley Wells

Shakespearean Tragedy

by A.C Bradley, OC (1904)

BBC 'In Our Time' Podcast – Hamlet

BBC 'In Our Time' Podcast

– Is Shakespeare History?

Course offered

OCR English Literature A Level (H472)

Geography

Landscapes & Places

Geography A Level

The Geography department aims to exploit natural curiosity and concern about the major contemporary issues in an increasingly interconnected world. An A Level Geographer can expect to develop transferable key skills, including numeracy, literacy, IT, investigation and research, problem posing and solving, logical reasoning, teamwork and statistics to help access and clarify everyday issues.

Across the two years of A Level study, topics will be investigated through independent research, structured questions and the fundamental skill of writing evaluative, analytical and synoptic essays. Fieldwork is an integral part of the course and there are three field trips during the Spring and Summer Terms and a four day residential field trip at the end of the Summer Term which prepares pupils for the non-examined assessment (an independent investigation project). These trips help to consolidate learning and provide pupils with the skills that are needed to succeed in the non-examined assessment (coursework), forms 20% of the full A level. This involves pupils designing their own fieldwork in order to collect their data during our four day residential trip in order to answer their investigation question in the form of a 8,000-10,000 word report.

The Geography department has its own well stocked library with a selection of books, journals, magazines as well as subscriptions to several documentary streaming services. It also provides a wonderful place to work independently.

The Bingen Geography Society is run by Upper College geographers, where the society attends or hosts numerous seminars, lectures, debates and reading groups. Many of our geographers enter the annual extended essay competitions such as the Fitzwilliam College Cambridge Land Economy Essay Competition and the Royal Geographical Society Young Geographer of the Year competition which combine to produce excellent results and global citizens.

What does the course cover?

The Geography A Level is divided up into four sections:

- Physical Systems:
 - Coastal Landscapes
 - Earth's Life Support Systems
- Human Interactions:
 - Global Migration
 - Changing Spaces, Making Places
 - Human Rights
- Geographical Debates:
 - Hazardous Earth
 - Disease Dilemmas
- Investigative Geography (Non-examined assessment)

“Geographers are literate, numerate, empathetic, independent thinkers who are able to apply theories and models to real world places, people and environment.”

Fraser Dobney, Head of Geography

Recommended reading

Origins by Prof. Lewis Dartnell

Peak Inequality by Prof. Danny Dorling

How Migration Really Works by Hein de Haas

Disaster By Choice by Ilan Kelman

Course offered

OCR Geography A Level (H481)

History

War & Peace

History A Level

The History department is enthusiastic and energetic, relishing a collaborative engagement with the past; we believe that what we teach and study is vitally important. The department focuses on building the skills of source and interpretation analysis, alongside synthesis of evidence, argument and judgement, which are all articulated via sophisticated written expression. Complex conceptual thinking is challenging and rewarding.

Through the Morley Society, the History department offers a range of extension activities, including seminars, external lecturers, members' papers and quizzes and a well attended and fully costumed annual dinner. The Cheltenham Literature Festival is an annual fixture for the department, with pupils attending talks by Niall Ferguson on Henry Kissinger, the 'legendary but controversial' American statesperson, and Don McCullin, one of the greatest war photographers, meditating on dilemmas such as to how one has 'to bear witness [to the past] you cannot just look away'.

The History Library offers a quiet and companionable area for individual study and research. The library is constantly restocked and enables pupils to broaden their thinking beyond the curriculum.

What does the course cover?

The History curriculum provides pupils with the skills to take the next thinking and working step in life beyond Cheltenham College, whether it is chosen to study the subject to degree level or not.

Typically, pupils study the Tudors: England 1485-1603, learning about the scheming, venality, and at times unholy activities of the Church. Paired with the American dream: reality and illusion 1945-1980, where seven presidents ride an arc of economic boom and bust, battling an explosion of civil rights and student protest, and the military-industrial complex – the course content is full of depth, excitement and striking contrast.

Coursework on the British Empire forms 20% of the full A Level. Pupils cover historical skills of research and referencing and are expected to deliver a 4,500-word independent piece of work. In the final Summer Term, there are two examination papers, making up the final 80% of the course.

"History allows our pupils to access the heady sense of escapism to be found in the 'rich tapestry' of the past, at the same time as it develops in them the means to participate intelligently in the world."

Jo Doidge-Harrison, Head of History

Recommended reading

Empire by Jeremy Paxman

Dissolution by C.J. Sansom

In Memoriam by Alice Winn

Chickenhawk by Robert Mason

Course offered

AQA History A Level (7042)

History of Art

Analysis & Interpretation

History of Art A Level

The study of Art in its historical and contemporary forms offers crucial knowledge of world civilisations. The department focuses on teaching both visual and analytical skills that can be applied in many walks of life, as well as gaining the tools to understand how images and objects work to shape our social and political identities. At Cheltenham, History of Art encourages pupils to research and investigate art through first-hand experiences, understand key historical terms, concepts and issues whilst recognising the ways in which art has been used and interpreted by past and present societies. With a predominantly visual subject such as this, the first-hand experience of viewing works of art in their natural context is invaluable. In the Autumn and Summer Terms, pupils are taken to London and Oxford galleries. There is also the opportunity to participate in a culturally enriching trip to Florence and Rome.

What does the course cover?

At the end of the Upper Sixth, there is assessment via two externally examined papers. One paper focuses on Visual Analysis and Themes, with pupils concentrating on Identities and War in Art and architecture. For the second paper, pupils are taught about two broad periods in the History of Art, namely Invention and Illusion: the Renaissance in Italy, and Power and Persuasion: the Baroque in Catholic Europe.

Pupils studying History of Art at A Level should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the contexts of art, analyse and interpret artists' work, demonstrate understanding of visual language and make critical judgements about art through substantiated reasoned argument.

Recommended reading

Thinking about Art: A Thematic Guide to Art History by Penny Huntsman
Keeping Eye an Open: Essays on Art by Julian Barnes
Christ to Coke: How Image Becomes Icon by Martin Kemp

Course offered

Pearson Edexcel History of Art A Level (9HT0)

Information Technology

Systems and Solutions

Information Technology BTEC National Level 3

Information Technology sits at the centre of modern life, shaping how we communicate, work, and solve problems across society. This course is designed for students who want to understand not only how technology works, but how it influences individuals, organisations, and the wider world.

The BTEC National in Information Technology is a forward-looking, applied qualification that combines technical knowledge with real-world problem-solving. Students gain confidence working with complex digital systems, exploring emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, and critically evaluating the social, legal, and ethical impact of digital change. Learning is practical, engaging, and relevant, with project-based tasks that reflect professional contexts. Students also explore infrastructure, cybersecurity, data protection, and the role of technology beyond the classroom.

This qualification suits students who enjoy applied learning and want a strong foundation for higher education. It bridges naturally with subjects such as Business, Mathematics, Psychology, Philosophy, Media, Art and Design, and the Humanities, making it an excellent choice for students who see technology as part of a broader academic pathway rather than a narrow technical specialism. Students studying this qualification will be better prepared for a modern workplace dependent on inventive and efficient use of IT systems.

Students study four mandatory units that together provide a broad and balanced understanding of Information Technology in practice.

Externally assessed units:

Year 1: Unit 1 Information Technology Systems, covering hardware, software, networks, cloud computing, AI, and ethical issues

Year 2: Unit 2 Cyber Security and Incident Management, focusing on threats, vulnerabilities, and how organisations respond to attacks.
Internally assessed units

Year 1: Unit 3 Website Development, where students design and build a website in response to a client brief.

Year 2: Unit 4 Relational Database Development, where students create database solutions to manage and process data effectively.

Recommended reading

The Ascent of Information

by Caleb Scharf

The Lifecycle of Software Objects

by Ted Chiang

Once Upon an Algorithm

by Martin Erwig

The Industries of the Future

by Alec Ross

Course offered

Pearson BTEC National Level 3 Extended Certificate (AAQ) in Information Technology (468 TQT)

Latin

Structure & Stories

Classical Greek

Alpha & Omega

“Latin offers pupils a supremely logical and coherent structure and the rich cultural and literary heritage of the Romans.”

Lizzie Rawkins, Head of Classics

Latin A Level Classical Greek A Level

Latin and Classical Greek are two separate A Levels that follow a similar structure. The courses offer a rich blend of language and literature from the ancient world; each of them is a separate and fully timetabled A Level course. Pupils develop their linguistic skills to understand and appreciate some of the world’s finest literature, taking them inside the minds of authors from two millennia ago. The course enables pupils to gain an understanding of the events, culture and attitudes of Romans and/or Greeks at significant moments in their history. This course explores the ways in which the ancient world has shaped western civilisation and understand the relationship between the classical and modern worlds.

Latin and Classical Greek appeal to those with an interest in languages, good powers of recall and an appreciation of the literature and/or culture of the classical world. The courses offer the chance to develop skills which are at different times linguistic,

analytical, empathetic, logical, creative and critical, providing skills that equip pupils for a very wide range of interesting careers, as well as aiding study of other languages.

A background in this rigorous but varied study is well received in many areas; our pupils regularly go on to take degrees in subjects as diverse as Medicine, History, Modern Languages, Mathematics and Law, as well as the Classics and Ancient History degrees pursued by real enthusiasts. Recent university destinations include Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and St Andrews. Alumni have found careers in the city, accountancy, business, law, journalism, civil service and the foreign office, among many other fields.

The Classics department comprises six specialist teachers and six classrooms situated in a historic part of the central Quad at Cheltenham College. A rotating programme of annual lectures, competitions and trips is complemented by the lively pupil-led Classics Society, featuring games, quizzes and talks by pupils and staff at twice-termly evening events.

Recommended reading Latin

Dynasty by Tom Holland

Latin Love Lessons by Charlotte Higgins

The Metamorphoses by Ovid

Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of an Empire (TV series)

The Rest is History (Podcast)

Recommended reading Classical Greek

The Iliad by Homer

The Theban Plays by Sophocles

Persian Fire by Tom Holland

Troy (2004 movie)

Ancient Greece Declassified (podcast)

Course offered

OCR Latin A Level (H443)

OCR Classical Greek A Level (H444)

GCSE grade required

Grade 7 in Latin

Grade 7 in Classical Greek

Mathematics and Further Mathematics

Facts & Figures

Mathematics A Level

The Mathematics department aims to teach logical thinking and problem-solving, supporting pupils to become independent mathematicians who can apply their knowledge to many different scenarios. Mathematics A Level requires a definite mathematical aptitude, which will usually have been demonstrated by a high Grade 8 at IGCSE (or equivalent). Logic in thought and presentation, lateral thinking, mental tenacity and the ability to deal with abstract ideas are all needed and developed by the course.

“Mathematics plays a central role in the modern world; it is not only the language of Science and Technology but also a fascinating and challenging subject in its own right.”

Brendan Enright, Head of Mathematics

Recommended reading

Any puzzle book by Martin Gardener
drfrostmaths.com
nrich.maths.org

Course offered

Pearson Edexcel Mathematics A Level
(9MA0)
GCSE grade required
High grade 8 in Mathematics

What does the course cover?

The syllabus followed is Pearson Edexcel Mathematics A Level. The course is essentially split into two areas. Firstly, pure mathematics, which is largely algebraic and covers the topics: calculus, co-ordinate geometry, vectors and numerical methods. The second element is applied mathematics. This covers probability, statistics and mechanics. In probability and statistics, statistical skills are developed to analyse data which can then be related to that predicted by the theory of probability. Contexts vary from calculating the chance of winning the lottery to analysing quality control on production lines. Mechanics studies the skill of mathematical modelling; a complicated problem is simplified into one that can be solved using mathematical methods. Problems are associated with the motion of objects because of forces applied to them. Contexts can vary from the movement of cars to skiing.

Mathematics A Level gives sound training and discipline for the mind and an awareness of statistics and the methods of problem solving which permeate our technological society.

Further Mathematics A Level

Further Mathematics A Level is available to those of high mathematical calibre who enjoy an academic challenge. This is a second A Level taken in addition to Mathematics A Level. It extends studies of the same topics in greater depth, as well as introducing other more advanced areas. Pupils are given four extra periods of teaching per week. The syllabus extends that already required for Mathematics A Level. Mathematics and Further Mathematics counts as one choice when taking options but delivers two A Levels.

What does the course cover?

This A Level is much more demanding than the single Mathematics A Level and covers many higher-level topics including complex numbers, matrices, further vectors, proof by induction and much more. It is only suitable for pupils who are almost certain to get an A* in the Mathematics A Level. There are two compulsory modules and two optional papers.

Course offered

Pearson Edexcel Further Mathematics
A Level (9FM0)
GCSE grade required
Grade 9 in Further Mathematics GCSE
is required.

Modern Languages

Communication & Culture

“At Cheltenham College, we want our pupils’ language learning to open up a world of opportunity.”

Keri Price, Head of Spanish and German

Modern Languages: French, German and Spanish A Levels

There are three separate modern language A Levels offered at Cheltenham – French, German and Spanish. Languages are all around us; at work, on holiday and in day-to-day life – undoubtedly, we live in a multilingual society. However, Britons notoriously lag behind our fellow Europeans in our ability to speak a foreign language, making those who can a valuable commodity. In studying a language, we find out about other people and cultures, which in turn enables us to learn more about our own. This makes us more tolerant and politically and culturally aware as individuals.

Learning a foreign language has numerous cognitive benefits and develops listening and communication skills in the pupil’s own language, soft skills which are so valued by employers. Our French, German and Spanish courses on offer at Cheltenham suit pupils keen to pursue languages at university and in their future career, but equally combine well with almost any other A Level subject.

Pupils opting for French, German or Spanish at A Level must have a strong GCSE grade in the subject to meet the demands of the course. As linguists, time spent in the countries where the language is spoken is invaluable, and therefore we offer opportunities for language stays abroad.

As a languages department, we are committed to offering trips abroad. Our Modern Language Society events include an annual Inter-school Debating Competition, a cheese and wine tasting evening and pétanque in the park. These events encourage pupils to present on linguistic and cultural topics of their choice. We also promote participation in competitions such as the Anthea Bell and Stephen Spender Translation Awards, and the UK Linguistic Olympiad, amongst others.

What does the course cover?

We follow the AQA A Level specification for French, German and Spanish. In addition to developing linguistic competence, in the Lower Sixth pupils explore topics such as the changing state of the family, the digital world, French/German/Spanish music and cinema and cultural heritage. In the Upper Sixth pupils consider the impact of immigration, racism and integration as well as aspects of political life, such as youth engagement with politics and protest movements. This is assessed in Paper 1 (listening, reading and writing). In addition, for Paper 2, pupils study a set text and a film, about which they will write essays in the target language (writing). Speaking is tested in Paper 3 and in addition to discussing one of the topics above, pupils give a presentation with a follow up discussion based on their Individual Research Project (IRP).

Recommended reading French

Un Sac de Billes by Joseph Joffo
Lupin (TV Series)
Entre les murs (Film)
L’Étranger by Albert Camus
Inner French (Podcast)

Recommended reading German

Stasiland by Anna Funder
Goodbye Lenin (Film)
Ballon (Film)
Slow German (Podcast)

Recommended reading Spanish

Violencia by Jason Webster
Ghosts of Spain by Giles Tremlett
Madres Paralelas (Film)
Notes in Spanish (Podcast)

Course offered

AQA French A Level (7652)
 AQA German A Level (7661)
 AQA Spanish A Level (7691)

GCSE grade required

Grade 7 in French
 Grade 7 in German
 Grade 7 in Spanish

Music

Rhythm & Flow

Music A Level

At Cheltenham, the A Level Music course is a relevant and contemporary qualification offering pupils the chance to study a wide range of musical genres. The course successfully balances music by great composers from the musical canon such as Purcell, Bach, Mozart, Chopin, and Brahms with contemporary film composers musicians such as Hans Zimmer and Michael Giacchino, alongside popular musicians including Beyoncé, and Labrinth.

The Music Department prides itself on offering all pupils the opportunity to perform within the many performance spaces at Cheltenham College, including our theatre, Big Classical, the chandelier-lit recital room, Thirlestaine Long Gallery and our stunning 19th Century Chapel. We are also proud to be an 'All-Steinway School' ensuring pupils are never too far from a world class grand piano.

What does the course cover?

The A Level course is divided into three components, covering aural perception, appraising, analysis, performance and composition. These three components allow for an integrated approach, where the appraisal and analysis of music can feed into the performance of music, as well as the composition of new music. A huge benefit to those who choose to study A Level Music is that 60% of the course is NEA (non-exam assessment), allowing for an enviable amount of personalisation for individual pupils.

- Component 1: Appraising Music, pupils are externally assessed via a two and a half-hour paper made up of listening and analysis.
- Component 2: Performance, consists of an external assessment of a series of recordings made between March and May of the Upper Sixth year.
- Component 3: Composition, candidates are required to compose two pieces that are externally assessed. A minimum of four and a half minutes of composition is required

“Music is constantly evolving, inspiring creativity and expression in a way that no other subject can.”

Alex Fox, Director of Music

Recommended reading

This is Your Brain on Music

by Daniel Levitin

The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century by Alex Ross

The Aesthetics of Music

by Roger Scruton

Creative Musical Techniques

by Graham Redwood

Course offered

AQA Music A Level (7272)

GCSE grade required

Able to read music notation at minimum

ABRSM grade 5

Philosophy

Reflect & Debate

“Pupils enjoy individual, self-directed work, such as research tasks, which enables them to gain confidence and cement their own knowledge”

Independent Schools Inspectorate, 2026

Philosophy A Level

Philosophy A Level is an exciting course which is intellectually stimulating and academically rigorous. Philosophy A Level is excellent preparation for pupils aiming to apply for prestigious degrees at front-rank universities, such as Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. The qualification, offered by AQA, is well-regarded by universities. The department is staffed by four experienced teachers with PhDs in Philosophy and relevant areas.

The Philosophy A Level course prepares pupils very well for a degree in Philosophy. More broadly, Philosophy A Level helps pupils develop their thinking skills, ability to discuss, reading comprehension, and the requirement to write in a succinct, concise and accurate way. In addition to the practical benefits of studying Philosophy A Level, the course allows pupils to reflect both on contemporary moral issues and also on what it means to be human.

What does the course cover?

The Philosophy A Level has four equally-weighted components. In the first year, pupils will study Epistemology, which is the area of Philosophy concerned with knowledge. In this module, pupils will engage with the distinction between acquaintance knowledge, ability knowledge and propositional knowledge, exploring the limits of knowledge. Pupils will study the

work of major philosophers such as George Berkeley, Descartes, and Plato. During the first year, pupils will also study Moral Philosophy, exploring theories such as Utilitarianism, Kantian Ethics, Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, as Metaethics, as well as applied ethics issues such as stealing, simulated killing (such as in computer games), eating animals, and telling lies.

Pupils will study two further components. One is the Metaphysics of Mind, which gives pupils a chance to explore questions such as ‘Who am I? Are humans nothing but bodies (Physicalism), or do we have both a body and a soul (Substance Dualism)? This component allows pupils to engage with the work of philosophers such as Descartes, Gilbert Ryle, Anita Avramides and more besides. The final component is the Metaphysics of God. This component allows pupils to study not only arguments for and against God’s existence, but also the limits (and accuracy) of language used to describe God.

It is not necessary to have studied TPE or Religious Studies at GCSE, and one is not required to have studied philosophy formally in any sense prior to undertaking the A Level. Assessment takes the form of a mixture of shorter questions and longer essays in examinations which are externally assessed. There is no coursework/non-examined assessment.

Recommended reading

Morality by Bernard Williams
Meditations by Descartes

Course offered

AQA Philosophy A Level (7172)

Physics

Matter & Motion

Physics A Level

Physics is a subject suitable for pupils who want to find out how things work in the physical world and enjoy applying their mind to solve problems. Pupils who take Physics at A Level have many options available to them for university study including Engineering, Physics and Material Science. The course is designed to develop the problem solving ability of pupils and as such also lends itself to other careers such as law.

This specification is designed to encourage candidates to:

- Develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of the principles of physics
- Gain hands-on practical and data analysis skills
- Appreciate how science works and its relevance beyond the laboratory
- See how physics links to other sciences and how the subject underpins important technologies.

Outside of the classroom, Sixth Form pupils have the opportunity to find enjoyment and challenge in several opportunities offered within the department. All Sixth Form pupils are able to compete in the British Physics Olympiad and the PhysicsBowl as well as attend Science Society events. For those interested in engineering we support the pupils in achieving the Industrial Cadets Gold Award and we also enter a team in the F1 in Schools competition as well as a team to compete against other schools in Cheltenham to design and build a Mars Rover.

Recommended reading

A little history of Science

by William Bynum

A brief history of time

by Stephen Hawking

Surely you're joking Mr Feynman!

by Richard Feynman

Brief answers to the big questions

by Stephen Hawking

What does the course cover?

In the Lower Sixth pupils gain a detailed understanding of waves, electricity, mechanics, materials and they encounter particle physics. In the Upper Sixth pupils explore circular motion, simple harmonic motion, gravitational fields, magnetic fields, electric fields and nuclear physics. At the end of Upper Sixth, pupils choose which optional unit they wish to study. Many pupils applying for an Engineering related discipline at university, opt for the engineering unit. Other pupils captivated by their introduction to cosmology at IGCSE, opt for astrophysics.

The Physics course is assessed by three exams, each of which lasts two hours. In the first of these, pupils study many of the core areas of Physics including mechanics, electricity, waves and materials as well as being introduced to more esoteric aspects such as particle and quantum physics. The second unit covers further mechanics, fields and nuclear physics. Paper 3 is about practical skills and data analysis as well as an optional topic, chosen individually depending on personal interests. Throughout the course, practical skills are developed such as experimental design, problem solving, processing data and evaluating their results including quantifying uncertainty. Pupils are required to achieve a level of practical competency that will have to be endorsed by their teacher to pass the course. 15% of the questions in the A Level examination will test practical skills.

“Teachers provide a positive learning culture so that pupils engage readily and positively in their learning.”

Independent Schools Inspectorate, 2026

Course offered

AQA Physics A Level (7408)

GCSE grade required

Grade 7 in Physics or 7/7 Double Award and Grade 8 in Mathematics

Politics

Representation & Participation

“Politics is a living, breathing subject that impacts nearly every aspect of our lives.”

Alex Eldred, Head of Politics

Politics A Level

The political world does not stand still and neither does the teaching of it: the Politics department aims to deepen knowledge and understanding of the most powerful forces operating on people, communities and corporations today. As a subject it is current, accessible and ever changing. The course covers the study of governments, international relations, institutions and decision making processes in the UK and USA. It is a fantastic way to learn what shapes our world.

The Politics department at Cheltenham College is a vibrant place to be. We have an active society, the Morley Society, which runs jointly with the History department. Furthermore, in recent years, pupils have visited Parliament, interviewed our local MP, campaigned on behalf of parliamentary candidates in Cheltenham, hosted an American diplomat and questioned former Members of Congress. Pupils of politics require an active mind and an eagerness to engage in debate and arguments both written and spoken. A passion for modern history, political philosophy and current affairs is essential. Moreover, pupils should be keen to participate as citizens within a modern liberal democracy. Employers value the range of skills acquired by pupils of politics, particularly research skills, the ability to analyse evidence and the capacity to communicate ideas persuasively.

What does the course cover?

- Component 1: democracy, representation and participation; political parties and the electoral systems of the UK; and voting behaviour and the media. The course also investigates the history and philosophy behind three core political ideas: conservatism, liberalism and socialism.
- Component 2: UK constitution; parliament; the prime minister and the executive branch; devolved bodies of the UK; and the relationships between the UK executive, legislature and judiciary. Pupils then study one non-core political idea: feminism.
- Component 3: US constitution and federalism; Congress; the presidency; the US Supreme Court and civil rights; and US political parties and interest groups.

At the end of the Upper Sixth there is assessment via three separate papers. The first paper is on UK politics and the second is on UK government. Both UK papers require two written persuasive essays on the core content and a third evaluative essay on political ideas. When writing the first essay, arguments are found in an extended source. The third paper is about the US government and politics. In this paper assessment is first completed by comparing US and UK politics in two short essays. There are then two persuasive essays on the government and politics of the USA.

Recommended reading

How Westminster Works . . . and Why It Doesn't by Ian Dunt
Politics on the Edge by Rory Stewart
Chums by Simon Kuper

Recommended Podcasts

The Rest is Politics Podcast
Political Currency Podcast
The News Agents

Course offered

Pearson Edexcel Politics A Level (9PL0)

Psychology

Mind & Behaviour

Psychology A Level

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behaviour. It is about you, the people around you, how you affect them, how they affect you and about the differences that exist between different people.

In Psychology, we aim to understand human behaviour at an individual and group level. Underpinned by a long-running debate between nature and nurture, pupils are continually prompted to ask themselves, are we the product of our genetic inheritance or are we the way we are because of our experiences? It is a fascinating and exciting subject to study if the pupil has an interest in human behaviour. Pupils derive enjoyment from learning what makes people tick and the fact that the content is so relevant to them as individuals.

What does the course cover?

The AQA course covers a wide range of topics within Psychology, where pupils learn about theories, research and how to evaluate these. Topics studied include:

- Attachment, including how these are formed and the effects of not having been able to form an attachment in childhood
- Memory models, theories of forgetting and factors that affect the accuracy of eyewitness testimony

- Biological psychology covers the structure and functions of the nervous system, localisation of brain function, ways of investigating the brain and biological rhythms including the sleep/wake cycle
- Clinical Psychology & Mental Health looks at how we define abnormality, characteristics of phobias, depression and OCD as well as looking at some causes and treatments for these disorders.

The Research Methods section of the course teaches pupils to be practical psychologists, including how to design, carry out research and analyse results statistically. Different approaches or perspectives within psychology are introduced, allowing pupils to view the history of Psychology as a discipline, whilst comparing different approaches. Although there is no coursework element to this course, there are practical activities throughout the two years to support understanding of research design. Critical analysis and evaluative skills are essential skills that are learnt throughout the course, as well as the ability to apply knowledge gained to scenarios from everyday life. At the end of the Upper Sixth, examinations take the form of three, two hour exam papers. It is required to answer both short questions and one to three essays per paper.

Recommended reading

Reaching Down the Rabbit Hole: Extraordinary Journeys into the Human Brain by Dr Allan Ropper and Brian David Burrell
The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks
Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman
The Psychopath Test by Jon Ronson

Course offered

AQA Psychology A Level (7182)
GCSE grade required
Grade 6 in Mathematics and Science (preferably Biology)

Applied Psychology BTEC Level 3

The Applied Psychology course is a more vocational programme assessed largely through coursework and is equivalent to a full A Level. It offers a flexible, unit-based structure, with project-based assessments. Throughout the course, pupils develop practical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive, problem-solving skills. The department encourages pupils who choose this course to learn and work independently, actively researching, whilst also carrying out psychological investigations and giving presentations to peers. Having completed the course, pupils will have a strong understanding of psychological approaches and how these are applied to different areas of psychology, such as issues of aggression in society, psychology in business and consumer behaviour.

What does the course cover?

- Psychological Approaches and Applications (Unit 1)
- Conducting Psychological Research (Unit 2)
- Health Psychology (Unit 3)
- Psychopathology (Unit 4)

Two of the mandatory units are assessed externally via an exam (Units 1 and 3) and the remaining units are assessed internally through coursework.

Recommended reading

Reaching Down the Rabbit Hole: Extraordinary Journeys into the Human Brain by Dr Allan Ropper and Brian David Burrell
Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me) by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson
Making up the Mind by Chris Frith
Vision by David Marr

Course offered

Pearson BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate in Applied Psychology (2018)

Sports Science

Enjoy & Excel

Sports Science A Level

Sports Science focuses on having a deeper understanding of the human body and applying scientific theories and principles to optimise health and sporting performance.

We offer an innovative and multi-disciplinary approach, actively encouraging different methods of enquiry and learning. Within the classroom pupils learn about the physiological, psychological and sociological factors that influence the athlete and their performance. Addressing contemporary topics including the impact of ergogenic aids, sports psychology, sports technology and the increasing debate around the commercialisation of sport.

At Cheltenham this course has grown in popularity. It appeals to the inquisitive scientist, high performing athlete or aspiring physiotherapist among others. Combining theory with practical performance, pupils are given an excellent basis to develop understanding of sport science as an academic discipline.

Pupils on the course have recently enjoyed trips to Universities, taking part in

physiological testing. There has also been a talk from Professor Matt Greig on the biomechanical principles used in sports analysis and a former army officer on the physiological and psychological demands and stresses of decision making under pressure..

What does the course cover?

The Sports Science A Level is examined at the end of the Upper Sixth. The theory examinations form 70% of the overall grade and the NEA (non-examined assessment) marks the additional 30%.

The practical element (NEA) involves assessment in one sport / activity (15%) and a written piece of coursework (15%). Pupils will draw on theoretical concepts learnt and apply them to their own performance in this section of the course.

In the two exams at the end of Upper Sixth, pupils are assessed on their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations to optimise performance. This includes answering multiple choice, shorter questions and writing extended essays to draw together the different modules.

As it is modular-based, Sports Science interests pupils with numerous perspectives: physiological (including sports technology, energy systems or Newton's laws and their application to sporting performance), psychological (including arousal and attitudes, aggression and its relationship within sport or attribution theories and their effect on performance) or sociological (including factors affecting the nature and development of elite performance or sport and ethnicity and functions and policies of sport organisations).

Recommended reading

Real Science of Sport (Podcast)
The Sport Psych Show (Podcast)
Eat, Sweat, Play by Anna Kessel
Endure by Alex Hutchinson
The Rodchenkov Affair by Grigory Rodchenkov

Course offered

AQA Physical Education A Level (7582)
GCSE grade required
Grade 6 in Physical Education and Biology / Grade 6 in Double Award Science

Sport and Physical Activity

Enjoy & Excel

OCR CTech Level 3 Extended Certificate in Physical Education and Sport

The option to study the OCR Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate in Physical Education and Sport is a more vocational programme, assessed largely through coursework and is equivalent to a full A Level. It offers a flexible, unit-based structure with project-based assessments. It develops the practical, interpersonal and thinking skills required to be able to succeed in higher education and sports careers.

In the past, pupils have had visits to Bath University and the National Football Centre for hands-on laboratory testing as well as a day completing various watersports at Croft Farm Water Park in Tewkesbury.

What does the course cover?

The course is designed to allow pupils to study a range of centre assessed modules alongside project-based assessments and externally marked exams. Pupils complete the following units:

- Unit 1 – Body systems and the effect of physical activity (90 min exam that can be retaken)
- Unit 2 – Sports coaching and leadership (internally assessed and externally moderated by OCR)
- Unit 3 – Sports organisation and development (60 min exam that can be retaken)
- Unit 8 – Organisation of sports events (internally assessed and externally moderated by OCR)
- Unit 18 – Practical skills in sports and physical activities (internally assessed and externally moderated by OCR)

Pupils have to pass all units in order to gain a 'Pass' grade overall.

This course suits pupils that prefer learning outside the classroom.

Recommended reading

Real Science of Sport (Podcast)
The Sport Psych Show (Podcast)
Eat, Sweat, Play by Anna Kessel
Endure by Alex Hutchinson
The Rodchenkov Affair by Grigory Rodchenkov

Course offered

OCR Cambridge Technical Level 3 Extended Certificate in Sport & Physical Activity (05827)

EPQ

Known & Unknown

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

The Lower Sixth Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is a key part of the Sixth Form curriculum at Cheltenham College. It represents an opportunity for each pupil to step away from the confines of the A Level syllabus and to engage in an extended, in-depth study of a topic of individual interest to them.

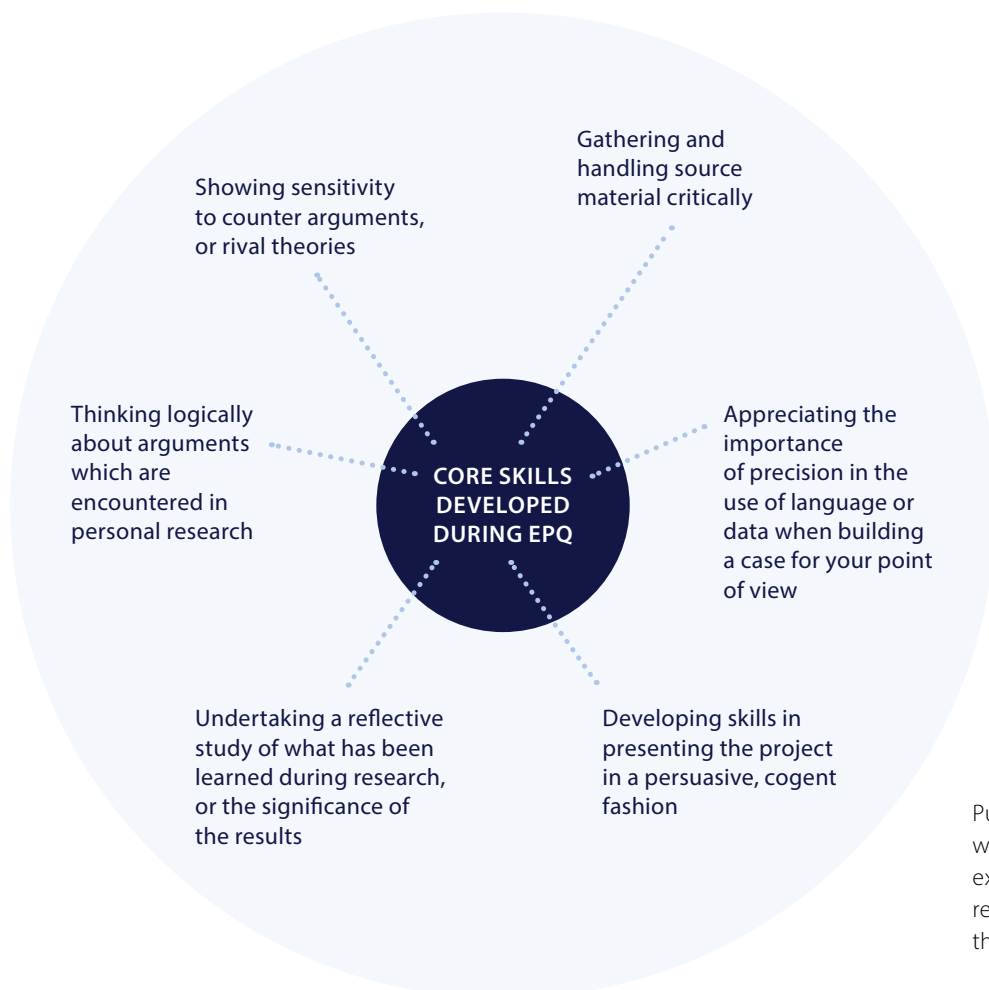
The project provides excellent preparation for undergraduate study, which makes the project extremely attractive to universities. Pupils identify, plan and research in depth, developing knowledge and understanding beyond the curriculum and managing their own learning. Information about the project supports university applications by individualising personal statements, enabling pupils to highlight their depth of interest

in a subject, their knowledge and their research skills. Project information also provides discussion points for interviews.

The EPQ is externally assessed and is equivalent to half an A Level. Some universities may take an EPQ into consideration in making offers, reducing required entry grades accordingly.

Cheltenham College follows the scheme offered by Edexcel

In the EPQ the skills of reading, research, review, analysis, writing and evaluation are developed. A dissertation is often chosen as the end product, but pupils may also seek to build an artefact, stage a performance, or undertake an investigation through field study.



Pupils are taught these essential skills in weekly timetabled lessons and are then expected to investigate their specific research question independently with the assistance of an EPQ supervisor.

Floreat

Flourish & Grow

Floreat

The Upper College PSHE (Personal, Social, Health, Economic Education) programme, known as Floreat, prepares our young people for life beyond school. It is our aim that pupils develop their personal potential and leave Cheltenham confident about their values and ability to make a meaningful contribution to society.

The principles of resilience, being open to opportunities, being ambitious and looking after health and well-being underpin the programme. It incorporates preparation for higher education, careers, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and includes relationships and sex education.

All pupils in Upper College partake in Floreat lessons. The programme is delivered through timetabled lessons, taught by selected teachers and includes talks from specialist external speakers on a range of topics from internet safety to travel health.

The programme has been specifically designed by and for our pupils, through an in-depth consultation. It is under constant review to ensure we meet the needs of our pupils and the changing world around them. Pupils work predominately using their digital devices as a means of recording their work and a range of teaching resources are used. Discussion on certain topics is encouraged, and a safe environment is fostered to allow for questions and queries to be addressed.

In Upper College, topics include

- Driver Safety
- The Criminal Justice System
- Physical Health
- Careers and employment
- Relationships and sex education
- Mental health
- Finance
- Keeping safe
- Drugs and alcohol

EAL

Nouns & Verbs

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

English as an Additional Language is a useful subject for those pupils whose first language is not English. Sixth Form pupils who do not have the prerequisite language qualifications for university entry are entered for the IELTS examination, usually in the Lower Sixth. Classes are held to prepare them for this.

The IELTS exam consists of four modules: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The examination targets relevant academic skills required for courses in further and higher education through a wide range of academic subject areas such as the environment, education and technology. Scientific journals, newspapers and lectures represent common sources from which materials are taken. The IELTS examination is an internationally accepted university entrance qualification, designed to grade pupils' level of English using bands from 1.0 – 9.0. The grade needed for university entry depends on the individual university or course, but most require a minimum of 6.5 – 7.5.

In the IELTS lessons, pupils learn how to construct balanced and structured essays, write descriptive reports about data or diagrams, discuss numerous topics surrounding current affairs and deal with advanced and academic language.

In addition to IELTS preparation, the department offers additional EAL support to those who require it. This takes the form of individual, shared and small group lessons. Lessons are tailor-made to address specific needs and areas of weakness in each of the skill areas, with an additional focus on English for academic purposes and study skills.

Learning Support

Empower & Evolve

Learning Support

Many pupils who have received additional support for learning in Lower College feel that their skills are sufficiently developed for working independently in Upper College. The greater demands and higher expectations of examinations in the Sixth Form sometimes encourages pupils to seek additional support, especially in Lower Sixth.

The Learning Support Department can help with the following skills:

- Time and task management skills
- Note taking and note making
- Advanced level reading and comprehension skills
- Planning and structuring of essays
- Developing clarity of expression in written work
- Spelling and grammar
- Revision and examination techniques.

Individual extra lessons are offered and arranged in consultation with parents where regular, ongoing support is desired. Charges usually apply for regular lessons. Pupils are welcome to seek help informally from the Learning Support department, without charge, should they wish to have a few lessons targeting specific skills.

The Learning Support department provides advice regarding special arrangements for examinations. Those who have had special arrangements for GCSE examinations are reassessed at Cheltenham College by specialist teachers. Current data is needed to determine if a pupil remains eligible for special examination arrangements considering the current criteria as laid down by JCQ, the examinations board. The criteria are amended annually.

SENCO@cheltenhamcollege.org

Chatfeild Roberts Library

Inform & Reflect

The Library is open from 8:00 to 21:00 every weekday, plus Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons (this extends to include Sunday mornings in the Summer). Sixth Form must sign in and out using Orah. The library also provides revision opening during the Easter and May half term holidays.

Lower Sixth have sessions with the Librarian for their EPQ who is also on hand to help with referencing and finding good quality resources.

The Reading Diploma encourages students to extend and reflect on their reading - with three levels culminating in the Gold which comes with its own special tie.

With comfy chairs and study desks, chess and jigsaw tables, there's plenty of space to study and relax, everyone is welcome.



“Personally, I think the opportunity at College to try new things, meet new people, and make new connections is what makes it so special, and sets it apart from anywhere else.”

Ed

Cheltenham College
Bath Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL53 7LD

Tel: +44 (0)1242 265 600
admissions@cheltenhamcollege.org
cheltenhamcollege.org

Registered Charity No. 311720