

KS4
OPTIONS
BOOKLET

2026



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Downlands Curriculum Ambition

Our ambition is to ensure that all students achieve outcomes that open doors to future opportunities, lifelong learning and success beyond Downlands. Through high expectations, challenge and support, we aim to provide transformative educational experiences that take every young person beyond their lived experience.

We are committed to developing students who leave us with the essential knowledge, skills and qualifications, alongside the ROCKS values to build confidence, resilience and independence required to thrive in their next stage of education, training or employment. Whether progressing to further or higher education or apprenticeships, our students are empowered to make informed choices and maximise the opportunities before them.

Through a rich academic and wider curriculum, we nurture students' curiosity, creativity and ambition, empowering them to navigate life's challenges and grow as learners and individuals. We explicitly develop character, well-being and healthy lifestyles through purposeful relationships, ensuring that all students feel safe, supported, successful and that they truly belong within our inclusive school community.

We aim to empower all students to become active, responsible global citizens who understand their place in the world and the positive contribution they can make to their local and wider communities.

As part of our commitment to equity and aspiration, we build students' cultural capital through our Pupil Passport programme, providing culturally enriching experiences that broaden horizons, deepen understanding and raise aspiration beyond the classroom.

Downlands Options Pathways

At Downlands we have designed three ambitious pathways which we believe provide all students with the opportunity to achieve outstanding results and a fantastic destination after Downlands.

These pathways have also been designed for students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and character to be successful in their next steps. We strongly believe, therefore, that as many students as possible should have the opportunity to continue to learn a language.

The Pathways:

- **Blue Pathway:** The majority of Downlands students follow this pathway
- **Yellow Pathway:** A more flexible version of the Blue Pathway
- **Green Pathway:** A more vocational pathway offering additional support

Pathway decisions:

As a professional organisation we will make the decision about which pathway is most appropriate for your child to follow. This decision is based on our values, experience and expertise in maximising student's success at Key Stage 4.

The decision-making process:

- Student's targets are reviewed in the Autumn term
- Students with a target grade of 5 and above for languages will follow the Blue Pathway
- Students on the Green Pathway started this in Year 9
- Students with a target grade of 4 or below for languages can follow the Yellow Pathway
- Students who are on the Downlands SEND register or have an EHCP can follow the Yellow Pathway

Students on the Yellow Pathway can still choose to continue studying their current language, and this remains a strong and positive option for them.

It is also important to note that the decision to place a pupil on the SEND register is made by our SEND team. This is decided on an individual basis and is based on evidence provided through primary transition, concerns highlighted by a number of teachers across subject areas and, when appropriate external professional advice.

The Pathways

Pathway	Blue Pathway	Yellow Pathway	Green Pathway
Overview	Students on this pathway will study for 9 GCSE or GCSE equivalent qualifications including a humanity and their current language. Most students at Downlands will follow this pathway.	Students on this pathway will choose a humanity subject and have the flexibility to continue with their current language or to choose an extra option instead. Students on this pathway will study for 9 GCSEs or GCSE equivalent qualifications.	This pathway develops the skills and confidence of students and will enable them to achieve an ambitious post 16 destination and includes; Forest Schools (not accredited) ASDAN – Certificate of Personal Effectiveness
Languages	French/German/Spanish	Students may choose to continue their language	N/A
Humanity	History or Geography	History or Geography	N/A
	Students must choose either History or Geography as their Humanity, but they are free to choose the other subject in their free option choices if they wish to study both.		
Free Option Choices	2 free option choices	3 free option choices	2 free option choices
Mandatory Subjects	English Language English Literature Maths Science – either Combined Science (equivalent to 2 GCSEs) or Separate Sciences Students will be allocated to the course which best suits them by the Head of Science and KS4 Science Co-ordinator. For further information please follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3PUIWGHJY&list=PLm6uw02SPCpSIQvILkWM66-bZFx5rag5_&index=2		
Non Examination Subjects	All students will continue to study the statutory subjects Personal Development Curriculum (Careers, Health Education, Citizenship) and Physical Education. These are not formally assessed but students will be graded on their Attitude to Learning, Behaviour and Organisation.		

Free Option Choices

GCSEs

- Art & Design – Fine Art*
- Classical Civilisation
- Computer Science
- Dance
- Design & Technology Product Design
- Drama
- Food Preparation & Nutrition
- Geography
- History
- Music
- Photography
- Physical Education**
- Religious Studies
- Textiles Design*

Vocational Qualifications

- Creative iMedia
- Cambridge National in Sport Studies**
- Cambridge National Health & Social Care

Please note:

* Art and Textiles cannot be chosen together as they are in effect the same GCSE.

** GCSE PE and Cambridge National Sport Studies cannot be chosen together. The PE department will advise students which course would be the best option for the students.

Options Key Dates

Students

- **Futures Day: Wednesday, 21st January**
Year 9 have a ROCKS character day which will focus on: future careers, the options process and, providing guidance to students on how to make informed options choices.
- **Student Option Talks: January - February**
Students are invited to attend options talks by subject leaders. These talks enable students to find out about option choices they will not have been taught at KS3.

Parents/Carers

- **Y9 Options Evening: Thursday, 22nd January**
Parents, carers and students are invited to attend an options evening which will include a talk outlining the options process. This talk is accompanied by an options fair where parents, carers and students can find out more about different options choices.
- **Y9 Consultation Evening: Thursday, 29th January**
The consultation evening will give parents, carers and students the opportunity to discuss progress.
- **Options Form Opens on MCAS Friday, 23rd January**
- **Options Form Deadline: 8:00am Friday, 13th February**
We do not allocate options on a first-come-first-served basis, but any forms received after this deadline are more likely to be put into reserve subjects.

Allocation of Option Choices

Our aspiration is that we give as many students as possible their options choices. After February half term the options choices are collated and allocated to students, and a communication confirming option choices will be sent at the start of the summer term.

It is not always possible to allocate every student their option choices. It may be that a particular options combination is not possible or that a particular options choice is undersubscribed. In these circumstances we will work with you and your child to find a suitable alternative.

We may not be able to provide a student with an option choice because a course is oversubscribed. In these circumstances we will give priority to disadvantaged and SEND students and consider whether the options deadline was met.

Choosing Options

It is important that students make the right option choices for them. These will be different for each student as they have different strengths and interests, as well as different ambitions for their futures. **It is also important to note that students will not be able to change their courses once they have been allocated.**

It is useful to remember that the options choices we offer will give students a range of skills which will be valued by employers and post 16 colleges, therefore no option choices are a 'waste of time' or 'lack value'.

Support:

There is a great deal of support available to enable students to make good options choices. They will be supported through a series of events including; a ROCKS Character Day focussed on futures, option talks, an options evening, and a Year 9 consultation evening.

There are a number of professionals at Downlands who can support students in making their decisions. Our Careers Advisor is Ms Hollingdale who will provide expert guidance to students on post 16 courses, colleges, and apprenticeships. Ms Hollingdale will be available during our Year 9 Consultation evening. Students can also talk to their form tutors and subject teachers about their option choices.

It is also important that parent/carers discuss the options with their child, and we have provided guidance below on the Do's and Don'ts of options choices.

DO:

1. Choose subjects because you find them interesting and enjoyable. Study the options booklet so that you have a good understanding of the topics you will cover in each subject, and you are confident that you will find them engaging.
2. Choose options because they are subjects that you are currently making good progress with. Look carefully at the skills and attributes you will need to be successful in that option and make sure you are confident that you can develop them.
3. Choose options because you researched a career or a particular post 16 course and know that a particular options choice will be helpful in enabling you to achieve that ambition.

DON'T:

1. Choose an option because your friends are taking that subject. It needs to be your choice based on your interests, strengths, and future ambitions.
2. Choose an option because you like a particular teacher. You may or may not have that teacher in Year 10.
3. Choose a subject because you think it is going to be an easy option. There are no easy GCSEs or Cambridge Nationals. However, if you enjoy a subject and are good at it, it will feel easier compared to ones that you feel less interested in or less confident in.

Qualifications and next steps after Downlands:

Our aim is for all students to achieve the highest grades they are capable of in their exams at Downlands, as this will give them the greatest range of options for study when they leave us. Entry requirements do vary between courses and colleges, but as a general rule, in order to be able to move on to study at Level 3 (A levels, Vocational Level 3s T levels or Advanced Apprenticeships) students will be expected to achieve five or more exams at grade 4 or above, usually including grade 4 in English Language and Maths.

In order to study certain subjects at Level 3 the minimum grade at GCSE needed in that subject will be a 6 (for example, foreign languages, maths and single science A levels)

Without achieving a grade 4 in both Maths and English Language, students may not be able to start Level 3 courses. Instead, they will be expected to re-sit Maths and or English Language whilst studying a level 2 course.



As a school we have invested in the Unifrog careers platform as a means of providing all of our students and their parent/carers free access to reliable, up to date information on careers. This platform allows students to search for career roles and pathways, hunt for college courses, apprenticeships, and degree courses not just in the UK but around the world and provides a wealth of related information to broaden their knowledge of themselves and the world of work.

We have started a tutor time programme of Unifrog activities to ensure that students learn how to use various features of the platform to best prepare them to plan for their future, starting with making their option choices.

If you wish to see for yourself what is available on Unifrog, have a look at this guide:

[What is Unifrog? : Know-how library](#)

As a parent/carers you can request to be added to your child's Unifrog account. We need your specific consent to do this, which you can give by completing the form linked here:

[Consent for my email to be attached to the Unifrog account\(s\) of my child/children – Fill out form](#)

Once we have your consent, we will arrange for your email to be added and will advise you when and how you can then create your account.

GCSEs and Cambridge Nationals: What's the Difference?

At Downlands we offer two main types of qualifications for students at Key Stage 4, GCSEs and Cambridge Nationals. These are Level 2 qualifications and are all accepted by Further Education colleges.

GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education)

GCSEs are typically assessed through end of course examinations and for most GCSEs there is no coursework element.

For those GCSEs with practical elements students undertake controlled assessments. This is where assessed work is completed under controlled conditions in school, usually over multiple sessions. In subjects such as Art, Textiles and Photography, coursework portfolios are also submitted as part of the GCSE assessment.

Tiered Examination Papers:

Mathematics, Science and Modern Languages are examined through a Foundation Tier covering grades 1-5 and a Higher Tier covering grades 4-9.

Why is tiering used in some GCSE examinations?

Tiering provides students with the opportunity to show what they know, understand, and can do, by presenting them with question papers that are targeted at a band of attainment.

Final decisions about tiers of entry for each student will not be made until January of Year 11 (2026). These decisions will consider the student's performance in class over eighteen months, and their performance and achievement in internal examinations in Year 10 and 11.

Cambridge Nationals

Cambridge National qualifications are vocational qualifications, and these qualifications are assessed more through coursework and practical assessment than examinations. Coursework and practical assessments make up 60% of the final mark and examinations 40%, and it is important to note that these courses are rigorous and challenging.

Cambridge Nationals are graded differently to GCSEs but are recognised as equivalent qualifications by colleges, universities, and employers.

Cambridge National Grading	GCSE equivalent grade
Level 1 Pass (P1)	2
Level 1 Merit (M1)	3
Level 1 Distinction (D1)	4
Level 2 Pass (P2)	5
Level 2 Merit (M2)	6
Level 2 Distinction (D2)	7
Level 2 Distinction * (D2*)	8/9

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Creative Arts

**Please note that Art and Textiles cannot be chosen together as they are in effect the same GCSE course.*

Art GCSE

The GCSE course is designed to give a broad experience of Fine Art. Students are introduced to a wide range of skills techniques and mediums and are empowered to develop their own individual responses. Art and Design not only teaches you a wide range of art disciplines it also develops your employability skills; creative thinking, time management, problem solving, attention to detail, accepting criticism and communication skills.



Why choose art?

- In the last decade the economic growth rate in creative industries was twice that of the national economy.
- Creative industries employ over two million people in the UK.
- Careers in the visual arts include: advertising, animator, architect, art therapist, art historian, cabinet maker, computer graphics, fashion designer, fashion journalist, film director, furniture design, illustrator, interior designer, landscape architect, lighting technician, map maker, motor vehicle design, museum or gallery curator, packaging design, performance artist, press photographer, set design, teacher, textiles design, typographer, web designer.

Course Leader: Ms Moss

Exam Board: AQA

Topics

The first part of the course consists of a period of exploration and experimentation. Students learn to work in both two and three dimensions in a wide range of media such as drawing and painting, print making and ceramics. Students are taught to respond to a given theme and learn how to work independently.

The second part of the course becomes progressively more personal. It is characterised by individual responses to a theme chosen by the student. All work is underpinned by the study of art, craft and design. This will involve trips to galleries and exhibitions as well as working with practising artists and crafts people.

Assessment

- **60% Portfolio of Work.**
Students complete 2 coursework projects over a year and a term, September of Y10 to December of Y11. The first project is Natural Environment; the second project title is chosen by the pupils. All class work and homework contribute towards the final 60%.
- Homework is an integral part of Art GCSE and must be completed each week (1-2 hours). **Students who have a poor art homework record in art should speak to Ms Moss before considering opting for GCSE Art.**
- **40% Externally Set Assignment**
A practical response to externally set questions. Students have approximately 12 weeks of preparation time followed by a formal ten-hour exam in the art rooms in which pupils complete their planned development in exam conditions.
- There is no written exam, and all artwork will be completed by May 2028.

Skills

Drawing, painting, lino printing, dry point etching, ceramics, sculpture, heat transfer printing, wood transfer, cyanotype, gelli printing, collage, textiles and photography.

Textiles GCSE

Through GCSE textiles you will acquire abilities in investigation, analysis, experimentation, refinement and problem solving. GCSE Textiles is a practical course in which you learn by doing, you will create imaginative personal work. You will develop your creativity and independent thought, learn to express yourself visually and let your imagination flourish. You will have the opportunity to develop skills over a broad range of textile techniques and applications, such as printing, weaving, knitting, felting, embroidery and mixed media.



Textiles will show an employer you are creative and imaginative with original ideas and strong presentation skills. Will give you an excellent foundation for studying further creative courses. The transferrable skills you gain such as creativity, analysis and problem-solving compliment a range of other subjects and careers.

Course Leader: Ms Hambly Walker
Exam Board: AQA

Topics

Students will create work based upon a range of themes such as Textures, Animals, Architecture and Messages; Investigating artists to create unique and original work using constructed textiles, printed and dyed textiles, surface pattern, stitched and embellished textiles.

Assessment

- Component 1 Portfolio: The coursework element consists of two projects of work completed in sketchbooks with a practical outcome for each project and accounts for 60% of your grade.
- Component 2 Externally Set Assignment: The Externally Set Assignment features seven tasks set by the exam board. You would select one of them to create a project of work over the course of approximately twelve weeks. You would then have ten hours of supervised time to create a final outcome for that project. This aspect of the course accounts for 40% of your grade.

Skills

This course provides students with the opportunity to learn and develop a range of textiles techniques and processes including felt making, weaving, applique, hand and machine embroidery, various methods of print, surface decoration and fabric manipulation and construction.

Photography GCSE

Photography will help you to develop your ability to communicate through expressive, experimental and narrative images. It will help you to understand the basic concepts of visual language and enable you to learn a wide range of photographic processes and techniques.

Photography is a practical course in which you learn by doing. You will create imaginative personal work using digital and physical manipulation. It will help you to look at the world around you more critically and encourage you to look at the work of other photographers.



Course Leader: Ms Hambly Walker

Exam Board: AQA

Topics

Produce images using digital methods of development and production to create static or moving images. Areas of study include lighting, viewpoint, aperture, depth of field, shutter speed, movement, portraiture, installation and photo-journalism.

Assessment

- Component 1 Portfolio: The coursework element consists of two projects of work completed in sketchbooks with a practical outcome for each project and accounts for 60% of your grade.
- Component 2 Externally Set Assignment: The Externally Set Assignment features seven tasks set by the exam board. You select one of them to create a project of work over the course of approximately twelve weeks. You would then have ten hours of supervised time to create a final outcome for that project. This aspect of the course accounts for 40% of your grade.

Skills

- Use photographic techniques and processes, appropriate to students' personal intentions
- Learn how ideas, themes and feelings can inspire creative responses informed by different styles, genres and aesthetic considerations and/or an individual's distinctive view of the world.
- Figurative and non-figurative image manipulation and imaginative interpretation

Drama GCSE

This course gives students the opportunity to explore the subject from a range of perspectives by devising their own, original creative performances; by bringing to life the work of a playwright; as theatre reviewers, developing their own thoughts on what makes drama and theatre successful; and as creative artists building and bringing a character to life through exploration and rehearsal. They will learn to confidently evaluate the effectiveness of their own and others work with sensitivity as they develop and present their work.

Course Leader: Ms Robertson

Exam Board: OCR

Topics

Year 10 -

- Key elements of performance
- Exploration of Practitioners
- Developing and Performing Character (Monologues)
- Devising Drama (Component 1 Assessed)

Year 11 -

- Exploration of Set Text - 'Find Me' (Section A of Written Exam - Comp 3)
- Live Performance Review (Section B of written exam - Comp 3)
- Presenting and performing text - Scripted preparation and performance (Comp 2)
- Preparation for Component 3 Written exam.

Assessment

- **40% Final Examination:** Written exam based on set text and live performances.
- **60% Coursework:** Based on a devised component with a Portfolio and a scripted component with supporting documents.

Skills

- Able to work together as a group displaying awareness of and sensitivity to others
- An ability to confidently evaluate the work of others using drama language
- Social skills, self-confidence and strong self-management
- A willingness to communicate ideas imaginatively and confidently
- An interest in developing an evaluative approach to live theatre



Music GCSE

The Eduqas GCSE Music course has three components: Performing, Composing and Appraising (Listening).

Performing (playing music): Performing on your own and in a group. This could be in any style, on any instrument or voice, including DJ skills, rapping, singing, band and orchestral instruments.

Composing (writing music): Exploring how great pieces of music were composed you will learn the processes and techniques needed to compose your own music. You will improvise and compose on instruments and use computer software. You will write for a specific purpose and planned outcome.

Appraising: Listening to a variety of music and learning how to identify the features and techniques heard. This builds on the elements of music and musical devices studied in year 7-9. At GCSE we focus on this in greater depth and over a wider variety of pieces and genres.

The course is open to students who currently receive additional instrumental or vocal tuition, either in school or externally, alongside their classroom music studies. Participation in a music group is also an advantage.

If you are not receiving tuition at present, please speak to Mr. Wardrobe to discuss your suitability for the course and the steps you would need to take to prepare before it begins.

Course Leader: Mr Wardrobe

Exam Board: Eduqas

Topics

- Musical forms and devices
- Music for Ensembles
- Film Music
- Popular Music

Assessment

The GCSE in Music consists of four assessments, and one externally examined paper.

- Component 1 – Performing 30%
 - Solo performance (minimum 1 piece) A performance where you take the lead role
 - Ensemble performance (minimum 1 piece) A performance, where you play one part in group of performers.
 - Together - total minimum of 4 minutes across the solo and ensemble pieces.
- Component 2 – Composing 30%
 - You will create 2 compositions. One to a set brief supplied by the exam board in September of Year 11 and one free composition of your choice.
- Component 3 – Appraising 40%
 - Listening examination: 8 questions, 2 on each area of study (see Topics)

Skills

- Organised, motivated, and independent learners who are able to meet deadlines
- Students who enjoy playing a musical instrument or singing, and enjoy creating new music
- Students who are willing to play an active role in the extracurricular music activities of the department, joining at least one group
- Learners who are willing to learn about music that may be outside of their normal listening and have a willingness to broaden their musical horizon

Computing

Computer Science GCSE

The Computer Science GCSE will enable students to develop a real, in-depth understanding of how computer technology works, giving them an insight into what goes on 'under the lid' of a computer. You will need to think creatively, innovatively and logically to design and program solutions to real-world problems.



Students will investigate the components that make up digital systems and how they communicate with one another and with other systems, they will also develop an understanding of the impacts of digital technology to the individual and to wider society.

Course Leader: Mr Kluge
Exam Board: OCR

Topics

- Unit 1: Computer Systems
- Unit 2: Computational thinking, algorithms and programming
- Unit 3: Programming Project

Assessment

- Unit 1 - Computer Systems (50% of total marks): A 90-minute written paper examining students' knowledge of computer systems.
- Unit 2 - Computational thinking, algorithms and programming (50% of total marks): A 90-minute written paper formed of two sections.
- Unit 3 - Programming Project: Students will undertake a practical programming task or tasks during their course of study.

Skills

- An interest in knowing how computer technology works
- An ability to think mathematically and logically
- The ability to be focused, hardworking and able to solve problems
- An interest in current and emerging digital technologies

iMedia Cambridge National

This Level 2 qualification provides a broad and solid foundation for future study of various aspect of creative computing. It supports progression to further study in digital technologies and aims to complement other qualifications that the student is preparing for.

This course involves a large amount of detailed written work and individual research investigations, which will provide a challenge and stimulus for the more academic students who will find this level of work stimulating and interesting.

Course Leader: Mr Kluge

Exam Board: OCR

Topics

Unit 1: Exam

You will learn how media codes and conventions are applied to create digital media products which engage audiences. You will also learn the purpose of, and reasons for legislation applicable to the media industry and what media producers must do to comply with this legislation. In addition, you will gain an understanding of the properties and formats of media files.

Unit 2: Visual identity and digital graphics

Visual identity is a vital component of any business, product or brand. It makes a brand recognisable and helps sell a product or idea to a target audience. In this qualification you will learn how to develop visual identities for clients and apply the concepts of graphic design to create original digital graphics to engage target audiences.

Unit 3: Interactive digital media

In this unit you will learn to design and create interactive digital media products for chosen platforms. You will learn the importance of design techniques such as house style, typography, image manipulation that are all necessary for an effective user experience.

Assessment

Examination 40% of final grade

- This will comprise of one 90 minute exam which will test a candidate's knowledge and recall of the compulsory topic "Creative iMedia in the media industry".

Coursework Units 60% of final grade

- You will be required to produce 2 coursework units, one of which is compulsory "Visual identity and digital graphics".

Skills

- An ability to use initiative, be resourceful, imaginative and creative
- Able to work independently when required and take responsibility for resources used
- Organised, motivated, independent learners who are able to meet deadlines
- Analysis research and evaluation skills

Design and Technology

Product Design GCSE

The Design & Technology - Product Design GCSE is designed around practical learning wherever possible. Students will use the whole range of tools and equipment in the department including the CNC laser cutter, CNC vinyl cutter, traditional woodwork tools, metalwork and plastics forming machines.



The AQA 8552 GCSE qualification focuses on developing practical skills, allowing students to manufacture high quality outcomes. You will learn about commercial processes and careers in related industries, as well as developing core transferable skills, such as investigation, collaboration and communication.

Course Leader: Mr Walker

Exam Board: AQA

Topics

Design & Technology students will study the core principles consisting of:

- New and emerging technologies
- Energy storage and generation
- Modern and smart materials
- Systems approach to designing
- Mechanical devices
- Materials and their working properties

Assessment

Resistant Materials students will specialise in working with wood, metal and plastics to learn manufacturing and production principles. The work culminates in a final practical project taking 35 hours and an accompanying design folder.

The theme for the project is set by the exam board in the final year of the course and is a real-life scenario that means a working product is produced.

How it's assessed?

Written exam: 2 hours, 100 marks worth 50% of the GCSE

Non-exam assessment folder and practical work, 35 hours, 50% of the GCSE

Skills

GCSE places an emphasis on understanding and applying iterative design processes

Students will use their creativity and imagination to design and make prototypes that solve real and relevant problems, considering their own and others' needs, wants and values

Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE

This exciting course offers a GCSE in Food Preparation and Nutrition. It will equip you with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to cook and also to apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating.

Following this qualification will encourage you to cook and enable you to make informed decisions about food and nutrition in order to be able to feed yourselves and others affordably and nutritiously, now and later in life. It will give you an understanding of the huge challenges that we face globally to supply the world with nutritious and safe food. It is expected that students will cook every week at home and at school in order to develop their practical skills and to produce a wide range of high-quality dishes. This course can lead to a number of different college and university courses and a wide variety of careers such as: chef, nutritionist, food critic, food journalism, health professionals and many jobs in the hospitality industry.

Costs: Students will need to buy and bring in food ingredients every week.

Course Leaders: Mrs Skelton & Mrs Moller

Exam Board: Eduqas

Topics

- Developing practical skills
- Nutrition
- Diet & Good Health
- The Science of cooking Food
- Food Spoilage
- Food Provenance and Food waste
- Cultures & Cuisines
- Food choice



Assessment

Exam: written examination (50% of qualification) to be taken at the end of Year 11, comprising of short and extended answers.

Practical Assessment (50% of qualification). Two parts to be undertaken in Year 11:

1. An investigative practical assessment worth 15%
2. A food preparation and practical assessment worth 35%

Skills

- Ability to apply yourself consistently to both the practical and theory aspects of a two-year examination course
- An interest in the theory of cooking and developing your practical skills
- An interest in nutrition and diet and how ingredients work in cooking
- Organisational skills to bring ingredients every week
- Ability to work independently and stick to deadlines for coursework

Humanities

Blue and Yellow Pathway

On the Blue and Yellow Pathways, the first choice that students need to make is between Geography and History. Students can choose to study both if they pick History or Geography as one of their free option choices.



Free option choices for Humanities include History, Geography, Classics and Religious Education.

Geography GCSE



The Geography GCSE examines contemporary human and physical issues in today's world and covers topics which are very much in the headlines, such as the climate crisis, global cities and migration, as well as more traditional topics such as ecosystems and rivers and coasts.

A core part of the course is fieldwork – a practical element whereby pupils collect data outside the classroom on real life issues and process the data into graphs and presentation techniques.

Students should have an interest in the world around them and be keen to understand the 'why' behind many issues presented in the media with a critical eye.

Trips:

Seven Sisters Country Park—Summer Year 10

Lewes Town Centre—Autumn Year 11

Iceland—April Year 10 (optional)

Revision weekend—Spring Year 11 (optional)

Course Leader Mrs Corcoran

Exam Board: Eduqas

Topics

- Topic 1—**URBAN**: Changing shopping habits, population and leisure in the UK, Global cities, Global development, Globalisation
- Topic 2—**PHYSICAL**: Weather hazards, climate change, river, and coastal landscapes
- Topic 3—**ENVIRONMENTAL**: Water world, ecosystems (Savanna and Rainforest)

Assessment

1005 exam (3 papers) All examinations are taken in the summer of Year 11.

- Paper 1: Theory Study Paper that examines all topics (40%)
- Paper 2: Problem Solving Paper where students must suggest a sustainable solution to a geographical issue. This could be any of the topics studied (30%)
- Paper 3: Fieldwork: practical element of the course whereby candidates undertake geographical investigations (two field trips) into the physical and human environment and use their findings to demonstrate skills of data analysis and evaluation in an examination paper (30%)

Skills

- A desire to know more about the world around you and why things happen (including people's cultures and environments)
- Willing to contribute to discussions concerning geographical issues
- Be prepared to undertake practical learning outside of the classroom
- Be 'up for the challenge' of using a wide range of skills such as maps, data sets, graphs, and visual stimuli

History GCSE



This History GCSE enables students to understand how the past has shaped the present. This course enables students to study and investigate a broad period of history and is highly valued by sixth form colleges, universities, and future employers. The course will build student's knowledge of five fascinating topics and give them the skills and tools to analyse and evaluate evidence and interpretations as well as teaching students how to build and construct their arguments about the past. A Berlin trip is offered (TBC).

Course Leader: Mr Joyner

Exam Board: Edexcel

Topics

- Thematic Study–Medicine in Britain, c.1250-present
- Historical Environment -the British sector of the Western Front 1914-1918: injuries, treatment, and the trenches
- Period Study–Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941-91
- British Depth Study–Early Elizabethan England, 1558-1588
- Modern Depth Study–Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-1939

Assessment

The History GCSE has no coursework, or controlled assessment is assessed through 3 exams papers.

- Paper 1:
 - Thematic Study –Medicine 20%
 - Historical Environment –WW1 10%
- Paper 2:
 - Period Study –Cold War 20% (Explain)
 - British Depth Study –Elizabethan England 20%
- Paper 3:
 - Modern Depth Study –Weimar and Nazi Germany 30%

Skills

The course will develop students:

- Ability to evaluate and test the value of evidence and interpretations
- To explain why key events have happened
- To build and construct their own arguments about the past

Classics GCSE

Classical Civilisation focuses on the civilisations of Greece and Rome and is a wide-ranging subject involving the study of literature, art, artefacts, archaeological sites and the ancient historical world. You don't need to know any languages, all the texts are in translation, and it doesn't matter if you haven't studied the Greeks and Romans previously;

all you need is an interest in the Ancient World and its cultures. From the study of religious beliefs to ancient ideas about war, Classical Civilisation involves interesting discussions about things that are still important today: life, death, gods, relationships, love, family, children, education, the nature of the world, our origins and development, the past, money, health, status, other cultures, friendship, power, patriotism, politics, law, crime, justice, empire and war.



Course Leader: Mr Ashdown

Exam Board: OCR

Topics

1. Myth and religion: Gods, Heroes, foundation Stories, Temples, Sacrifice, The Underworld
2. War and Warfare: Sparta, Athens, Rome, Literature relating to warfare; The Iliad & The Aeneid
3. War Poetry

Assessment

All Assessment takes place as final written examinations taken in the summer exam season of Year 11. There will be two 90-minute papers covering the topics listed below:

- Myth and religion
- War and warfare

Skills

- Ability to apply yourself consistently throughout a two-year examination course
- Willing to undertake investigative work and exam practice when applicable
- Able to work independently when required and take responsibility for resources used
- Willing to contribute to discussion and debate concerning the topics and express your opinion

Religious Studies GCSE

Religious Studies GCSE is an engaging and thought-provoking course that encourages students to explore major religious, ethical, and philosophical questions—including topics such as relationships, conflict, the value of life, and social justice. Throughout the course, students are supported in developing well-reasoned arguments and independent thinking. A GCSE in Religious Studies provides an excellent foundation for a wide range of future careers and pathways. The analytical, ethical, and communication skills developed are valued in professions such as **medicine, law, teaching, social work, the armed forces, politics, charity work, the travel industry**, and many others. This highly relevant course prepares students for life in the 21st century and keeps open a broad set of opportunities for further study in **Sixth Form, college, and Higher Education**.

Course Leader: Miss Bassett
Exam Board: AQA (Syllabus A)

Topics

Component 1: The studies of religious beliefs, teachings and practices.

The two religions we study are **Christianity** and **Judaism** (building on knowledge acquired at KS3)

Component 2: The study of four religious philosophical and ethical themes.

- **Theme 1 - Relationships and Families:** Big questions include: Is marriage still considered important today? Why do some religions see homosexuality as sinful? Should people have sex before marriage?
- **Theme 2 - Religion and Life** Big questions include: How was the universe made? Is it right to have an abortion? Should we experiment on animals?
- **Theme 3 - Religion, Peace and Conflict.** Big questions include: Is war inevitable? What is terrorism and what is its impact?
- **Theme 4 - Religion and Social Justice.** Big questions include: What is prejudice and discrimination? What are human rights?

Assessment

The course is assessed through **two exam papers**, each lasting **1 hour and 45 minutes**.

Each paper contains a range of question types designed to test different skills on knowledge and evaluation, including **1-mark, 4-mark, 6-mark, and 12-mark questions**.

The longer questions assess a student's ability to **analyse and evaluate religious beliefs and ethical issues**, using the familiar **PEEDL** structure commonly used in extended writing in RS and other subjects, which students have been developing throughout KS3.

Skills

- **Commitment to sustained learning over the two-year course**, including regular review of content and exam skills.
- **Willingness to carry out research, reflection, and exam-style practice** to deepen understanding of religious and ethical issues.
- **Ability to work independently and manage your own learning**, including organising notes and using resources effectively.
- **Confidence to engage in discussion and debate**, expressing your views clearly while listening and responding respectfully to others.

Languages: French/German/Spanish GCSE



At Downlands we believe that an important part of a student's education is to study language, and our ambition is for the vast majority of students to leave with a GCSE in the language they began in Year 7.

We believe that learning a language will enable students to take advantage of future careers and opportunities abroad when they

leave Downlands. We also believe that studying languages enables students to gain knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures.

It is widely recognised that in a globalised world the ability to communicate in a second language is invaluable and increases the employability of an individual. The importance of languages in providing opportunities for students is recognised by the government. Students who aspire to attend university should note that some Russell Group Universities have suggested that having a language at GCSE or A Level will give them an advantage over other applicants.

The GCSE is highly relevant to all students and covers topics which are very relatable to students, such as friends, free time, media and school. Students are encouraged to use the language for themselves, and language is taught in chunks, allowing learners to communicate quicker and more meaningfully. Students should have an interest in the world around them and be prepared to undertake work outside of lessons.

Course Leader Ms Tizard

Exam Board: AQA

Topics

The course is divided into three vocabulary themes:

Theme 1: Identity and culture: Includes topics such as "Me, my family and friends", "Technology in everyday life" "Celebrity Culture"

Theme 2: Local, national, international, and global areas of interest: Includes topics such as "Home, town, neighbourhood, and region" and "Travel and tourism"

Theme 3: Current and future study and employment

Grammar is taught through the topics.

Assessment

25% Reading

25% Listening

25% Writing

25% Speaking

The four skills are tested at the end of the course by final examination. All papers are available at either foundation or higher. Students will sit the same tier for all their papers decided by their teacher based on their target grade and attainment.

Skills

- A willingness to learn, to try new things and make mistakes.
- An interest in languages and different cultures.
- A willingness to communicate with others.
- An ability to use initiative, be resourceful, imaginative and creative.

Physical Education

PE GCSE & Sports Studies Cambridge National

On the options form students only need to opt for PE in general and the teaching staff will decide which course best suits the student. Any queries about this should go straight to the PE staff.

PE GCSE

PE GCSE is an exciting and varied course available to all students who are committed to both academic and practical PE. Contemporary topics, many of them new to the students, will help them develop a well-rounded set of transferable skills. This will prepare them for progression to further academic and vocational studies. A well-motivated approach is required to all aspects of Physical Education. We demand a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment from our students to their academic studies and personal practical performance. We are confident that the AQA GCSE Physical Education course will inspire and challenge our students to be their best.

Course Leader: Mr Holt
Exam Board: AQA

Topics

This comprehensive course offers opportunities to study applied anatomy and physiology, movement analysis, physical training, use of data, sport psychology, socio-cultural influences, health, fitness and well-being and practical performance.

Assessment

Paper 1: The human body and movement in physical activity and sport (30%):

Applied anatomy and physiology - Movement analysis - Physical training

Paper 2: Socio-cultural influences and well-being in physical activity and sport (30%):

Sports psychology - Socio-cultural influences - Health, fitness and well-being

Non-Examined Assessment 40% of final grade

- Practical performance in three different physical activities in the role of player/performer (30%):
 - One in a team activity (10%)
 - One in an individual activity (10%)
 - The third can be in either a team or in an individual activity (10%)
- Analysis and evaluation of performance to bring about improvement in one activity (10%)

Skills

- Participation in a range of different sports, individual and team, both in school and outside
- Interest in the theory side of Physical Education
- All-round fitness and the ability to participate in a wide a range of sports
- Commitment to improve and develop specific and general sporting skills (through attending extra-curricular clubs)

Sports Studies Cambridge National

The aim of this qualification is to develop a range of skills in sport and physical activity in different contexts and roles. Students are assessed in their own practical ability and also in their ability to lead physical activities, umpire, referee and coach. Students are assessed in 3 different units over Year 10 and 11.

Course Leader: Miss Bridge

Exam Board: OCR

Topics

Unit 1- Contemporary issues in sport

Unit 2- Performance and leadership in sports activities

Unit 3- Sport and the media

Assessment

Unit 1 -Exam 40% (sat at the end of Year 11)

Pupils will study the following content for their exam:

- Issues which affect participation in sport
- The implications of hosting a major sporting event for a city or country
- The role National Governing Bodies (NGBs) play in the development of their sport
- The use of technology in sport.

Unit 2—Coursework Performance and leadership in sports activities—40% (completed throughout Year 10 and 11)

In this unit pupils will have an opportunity to develop skills both as a performer, and as a leader, developing a range of transferable skills.

Topics include:

- Applying practice methods to support improvement in a sporting activity
- Organising and planning a sports activity session
- Leading a sports activity session

Unit 3—Sports and the Media—20% (assessed by a set assignment)

Topics include:

- The different sources of media that cover sport
- Positive effects of the media in sport
- Negative effects of the media in sport

Skills

- You will have an interest in sport and a sound sporting ability
- You need to be hard working, dedicated and able to meet deadlines
- The ability to work independently
- You will need good IT Skills

Dance GCSE

This course will enable candidates to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of dance as choreographer, performer and critic through:

- Applying and adapting a wide range of skills and techniques effectively in performing and choreographing dance
- Creating dances for a range of purposes and in response to different stimuli
- Developing the ability to analyse, evaluate and appreciate dance

Course Leader: Ms Cull and Miss Nee

Exam Board: AQA

Topics

Component 1: Performance and Choreography

Component 2: Dance Appreciation

Assessment

The course consists of two components. 60% is practically assessed and 40% is theory based.

Component 1:

Performance 30% of GCSE

- Set phrases through a solo performance (approximately one minute in duration).
- Duet/trio performance (three minutes in a dance which is a maximum of five minutes in duration).

Choreography 30% of GCSE

- Solo or group choreography –a solo (two to two and a half minutes) or a group dance for two to five dancers (three to three and a half minutes)

How is it assessed

Internally marked and externally moderated

Component 2: Dance Appreciation

What's assessed?

- Knowledge and understanding of choreographic processes and performing skills
- Critical appreciation of own work
- Critical appreciation of professional works

How is it assessed?

Total component 40% - Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes

Skills

- Participation in a range of performance arts
- Interest in the appreciation of dance and choreography
- Commitment to improve and develop dance performing in a group and solo

Health and Social Care Cambridge National

This qualification introduces students to the biggest employment sector in the UK, which includes various health and social care settings, such as the NHS, adult and child support services and social services.

Pupils will be introduced to the skills and knowledge required to work in this vocational sector. Many of these skills, in particular communication, team work and first aid are essential life skills and are transferrable across any workplace.

Course Leader: Mr G Whitaker
Exam Board: OCR

Topics

Unit 1—Exam - Pupils will learn about individual rights and how they are maintained. They will learn about the values of care and what happens if they are not applied. They will learn about the importance of effective communication. They will also cover aspects regarding safety and security measures and procedures within health and social care settings.

Unit 2—Supporting individuals - Pupils will learn about the various stages of life and development. They will learn about significant life events and the impact that it can have on individuals as well as the sources of support and help that are available.

Unit 3—Health promotion campaigns - In this unit, pupils will study current public health issues and the campaigns that address them. They will learn about the factors that affect health as well as the barriers to leading a healthy lifestyle. Pupils will have to plan and deliver their own health promotion campaign.

Assessment

Students are assessed across these three units in Year 10 and 11:

- Exam unit = 40% (sat at the end of Year 11)
- Coursework unit = 30% 'Supporting individuals through life events'
- Coursework unit = 30% 'Health promotion campaign'

The two internal units will be assessed through:

- Practical tasks
- Independent research
- Group work

Skills

- You need to be hard working, dedicated and able to meet deadlines
- The ability to work independently
- You will need good IT skills

Green Pathway only

ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness



Course Leader: Mr Stokes
Exam Board: ASDAN

Topics

- The course is divided into thirteen modules which include; communication, citizenship and community, sport and leisure, the environment, vocational preparation, work-related learning and enterprise.

Assessment

Students are assessed through an ongoing portfolio which records their work towards challenges. Students can achieve a L1 or L2 qualification.

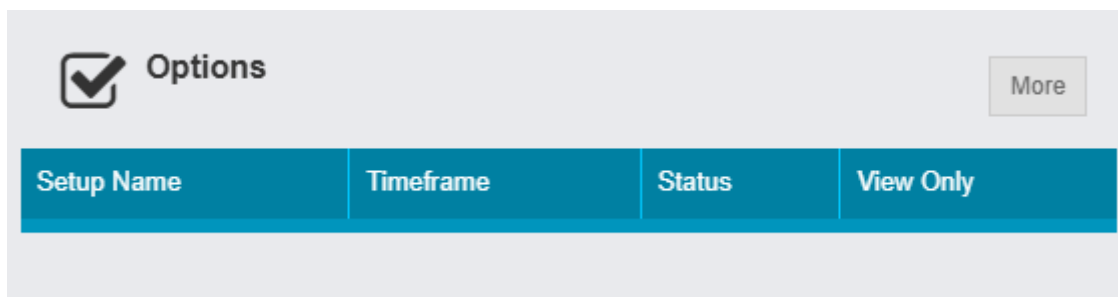
Skills

- Working with others
- Improving own learning and performance
- Problem solving
- Planning and carrying out a piece of research
- Communication through discussion
- Planning and giving a presentation

Completing the Options Form

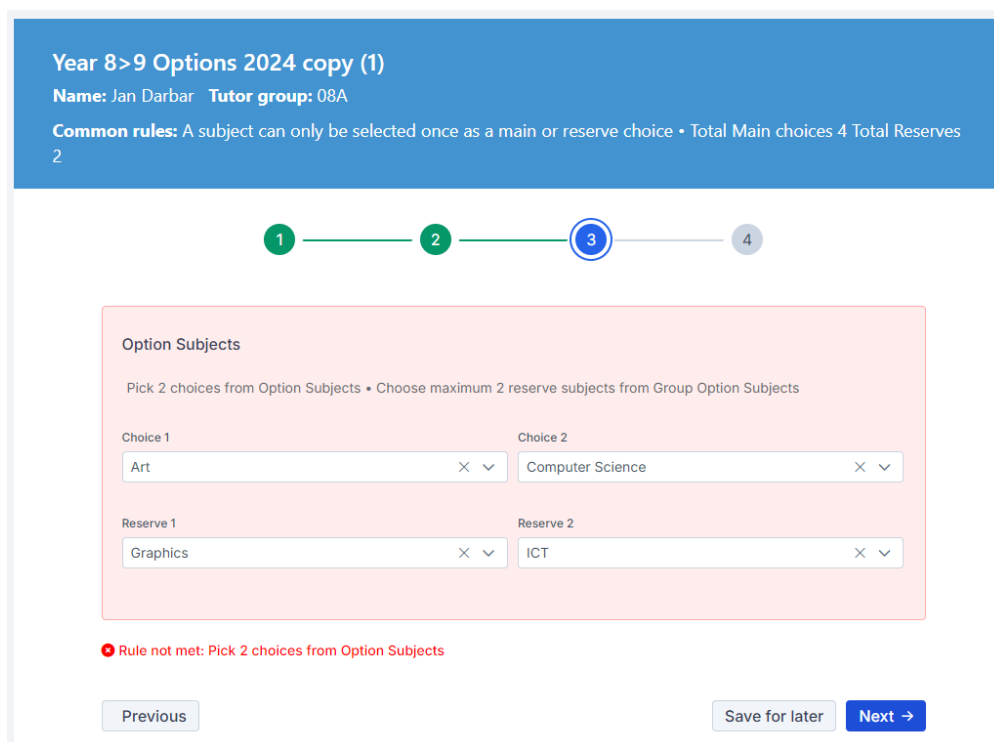
The Options Form is completed online either using the web browser or app versions of My Child at School. We recommend using the web browser version as it is clearer and more stable. Please be aware on the app that the Close tab after Submission cannot be detected by the App, so the User should use the Back Arrow to Close the page.

From the homepage, look for the Options Widget and click More



From here click the only option to open the form. Please be aware that you may not edit the form once it has been submitted. Any mistakes will need to be communicated to Mrs Anscombe via email: canscombe@downlands.org

Dependent on the pathway your child is on you will have different pages. For the free option choices, you will need to select either 2 or 3 (this is identified on the form) and then select a reserve option. The form will not allow you submit unless you have followed the rules of the pathway.



If you have any issues getting onto MCAS please email the mcas@downlands.org support line. Any issues with options please contact Mr Adams, Deputy Headteacher sadams@downlands.org