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The Curriculum Explained

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The Sixth Form Curriculum

Introduction

This booklet provides you with the information relating to the educational pathways available in the Sixth Form at DESC. The courses that we offer are designed to enable all of our students to formulate a suitable programme of study according to their ability, individual interests and future aspirations. We offer two main pathways in the Sixth Form, either traditional academic GCE Advanced levels or a more vocational BTEC route.

GCE Advanced Level

The UK government is in the process of reforming the Advanced level programme and we are now starting to see the impact on the structure of A level qualifications. The existing system of A level assessments involves students studying AS examinations in Year 12 and A2 examinations in Year 13, with the two qualifications then being combined to produce the final A level grade.

The newly re-structured Linear A levels, involve students being given examinations at the end of the two-year course in Year 13. **This new process is certainly very unfamiliar to students and has the potential for surprises and disappointments if not managed correctly.** At present some subjects are already using the new format and others are still operating under the previous system. To help manage the transition from the old to the new A levels, we have made a policy decision at DESC that encompasses all subject areas. All students will continue to study four AS levels in Year 12, even if the subject is a newly reformed linear A level. Students can then make the choice after AS results day as to which subjects to continue with to full A level. The benefits of this approach include:

- ✓ All students know they are studying for examinations in all subjects during Year 12.
- ✓ The College can structure the courses/study leave periods etc for all students.
- ✓ Students will have actual qualifications after the first year of study, so if they leave DESC they will have a qualification for their time in Year 12.
- ✓ Universities have got official grades to use when offering places on courses.
- ✓ The results in the AS examinations will be a much clearer guide as to progress and predicted grades for A level.
- ✓ Some top universities prefer students to sit the AS level examinations followed by full A level examinations. This will be an important factor when deciding to offer a place and preference will be given to students who have studied in this way.

The only subjects that continue to be taught under the old A level system (where the AS will count for 50% of the total A level) are:

- ◆ Mathematics
- ◆ Further Mathematics

The full A level examinations in Year 13 will assess and build on the knowledge and understanding of the subject content covered during Year 12, so the content of the work undertaken in Year 12 remains the same whether you sit the AS examination or not.



The Sixth Form Curriculum

BTEC Diploma Courses

In addition to subjects studied at Advanced Level, we are pleased to offer BTEC National Diplomas in both Sport and Enterprise & Entrepreneurship. These qualifications involve a different approach to assessment, where there are no terminal examinations, but where there is an ongoing assessment of coursework. This educational pathway maybe a more suitable level 3 course, with the resultant grades having an equivalency to A levels in regard to UCAS points.

We also offer the Extended Project for those students who are interested in extending their knowledge of a specific subject. This also provides additional UCAS points.

Progression from Year 12 to Year 13

We hope that the majority of students will make the transition into Year 13. However, in an effort to ensure our students undertake an appropriate programme of study, all students in Year 13 must have attained at least two E Grade at AS Level, or have completed and passed 10 units if they are studying for the BTEC qualification. We will not allow students who have not achieved this minimum level of achievement to return into Year 13.

It should also be noted that we do not allow students who achieve a U Grade at AS Level to re-sit or progress to A2 in the subject concerned unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please note that if a student does not achieve grades as high as they hoped for in Year 12, re-sitting the year is not an option. Ultimately, decisions will be made at our discretion, with the welfare of individual students always at the forefront of our thinking.

Discontinuing AS subjects during Year 12

Most of our students will complete AS Levels in four subjects. However, during the course of Year 12 we may, after consultation with teachers and students, agree that a student studying four AS levels may discontinue a subject; this must be authorised by Mr Hancock, Assistant Headteacher.



Which courses should I chose?

There are particular subjects which may be required or expected for entry to certain degree courses. These requirements may change as universities adjust their expectations, and only the university's website should be considered authoritative.

At present the following guidelines should be borne in mind:

- ◆ Natural Science: Mathematics plus at least two of the three sciences advised
- ◆ Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science: Both Chemistry and Biology strongly advised
- ◆ Pharmacy: Chemistry and Biology are strongly advised
- ◆ Engineering: Mathematics and Physics required, Further Mathematics is very useful
- ◆ Computing: Mathematics is required
- ◆ Psychology: Usually two sciences are advised, but entry via arts subjects is possible
- ◆ Economics: Mathematics is strongly advised
- ◆ Business Studies, Management: Mathematics is helpful but not essential
- ◆ Architecture: Either Mathematics or Physics is useful, and art portfolio is essential
- ◆ Foreign languages: Two languages are desirable but not essential
- ◆ Law: History is a good facilitating subject, but other A-levels at the highest grade are acceptable



Admissions Policy

Admissions to the Sixth Form from DESC students

Students will be asked to complete a Sixth Form Intentions Form by Thursday 7th January 2016 to give the College advanced notice of their future intentions and possible subject choices. All students will attend a guidance interview to allow the College to make final decisions regarding their chosen subject combinations and suitability for the Sixth Form.

All internal students must complete a formal application form, including subject choices. This application must be returned to the College by 1st March 2016, together with an AED 500 non-refundable* Administration Fee. When the offer of a place is made by the College, a non-refundable* deposit of AED 5,000 must be paid within 7 working days of the date of the offer letter. This AED 5,000 deposit will be deducted from the first term's fee.

All offers for Sixth Form places are subject to GCSE results. Students must attain the minimum GCSE grades (see page 8) in order for them to enrol on the desired level 3 courses. If a student fails to attain the necessary GCSE grades and cannot take up their place at DESC, they can request their deposit to be returned, this must be done in writing by 3pm UAE time on GCSE Results Day.

Students must confirm that they are taking up their place in the Sixth Form by 3pm UAE time on GCSE results day, otherwise the place may be allocated to another student. Please note that the deposit is only returnable if a Sixth Form place is declined in writing by 3pm UAE time on GCSE Results Day

Admissions to the Sixth Form from other secondary schools

A completed application form and a non-refundable* Application Fee of AED 500 must be returned to the Registrar by 1st March 2016. Applications made after this date may still be considered, however, preference will be given to students who apply by this date.

Supporting documentation, including a copy of the most recent school report and a letter of recommendation from the Headteacher/Head of Year needs to be provided along with the application form. All students are required to attend a formal interview to allow the College to make a final decision regarding the offer of a place in the Sixth Form.

If the offer of a place is made by the College, a deposit of AED 8,000 must be paid within 7 working days of the date of the offer letter. The deposit will then be deducted from the first term's fee. All offers for Sixth Form places are subject to GCSE results. Students must attain the minimum GCSE grades (see page 8) in order for them to enrol on the desired AS level courses.

If a student fails to attain the necessary GCSE grades and cannot take up their place at DESC, they can request their deposit to be returned, this must be done in writing by 3pm UAE time on GCSE Results Day. Students must confirm that they are taking up their place in the Sixth Form by 3pm on GCSE results day, otherwise their place will be allocated to another student.

Students will be required to produce a transfer certificate which they request from their previous school and hand into DESC on the first day of the new term. They will also be required to provide their Unique Candidate Number (UCI) number that can be found on their examination results information.

ALL PLACES AT DESC SIXTH FORM ARE OFFERED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HEADTEACHER.

**As per KHDA guidelines*

Specific Entry Requirements for A level courses

Although the minimum entry criteria to get into DESC Sixth Form is 5 subjects passed at grade 'C' or above at GCSE level, there are minimum grade requirements for individual subjects. The reason for these constraints is that we do not want to start a student on an academic course that statistically he or she is unlikely to be able to access the content.

Each subject area reviews their minimum entry criteria annually and the Headteacher agrees the minimum entry grade for subjects. As a general rule, students must gain a minimum of 'B' grade at GCSE in the subjects they wish to continue with at A level. **Please note that if the minimum entry grade has not been met, students will not be allowed to study that course.**

Option Columns

We have created the options columns to try and ensure that all students are able to choose their preferred combination of subjects. Students will need to choose one subject in each option column. If it is not possible to study your preferred combination of 4 subjects, please contact the College at: sixthformsupport@descdubai.com and we will endeavor to create a solution to the problem.

Please note that we can not guarantee any changes to the options columns at this stage.



Options 2016

| Common Core | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| L.I.F.E Lessons | History | Business Studies | BTEC ICT | Spanish |
| Ministry of Education Arabic (Arab passports) | French | Physical Education | Design & Technology (Food Tech) | Arabic |
| Islamic Studies (Muslim students) | Art | Computer Science | Economics | Business Studies |
| Supervised Study Frees | Geography | Physics | Music | Mathematics |
| Core PE enrichment | Mathematics | English Literature | Chemistry | Further Mathematics |
| Re-sit GCSE English Language & Mathematics | Biology | Media Studies | Physics | Biology |
| | Psychology | Government and Politics | English Language | Psychology |
| | English Language | Chemistry | Biology | Drama |
| | Core Maths | Geography | History | Computer Science |
| | Music Tech | Art | English Literature | Core Mathematics |
| | | | Government & Politics | Geography |
| | BTEC Enterprise & Entrepreneurship | | BTEC Sport | |

If your choice of subject combinations is not available, please e-mail sixthformsupport@descdubai.com



Entry Criteria to Year 12 at DESC

The minimum entry criteria to gain entrance to Dubai English Speaking College Sixth Form is 5 subjects at Grade A*- C. Entry criteria for specific subjects are as follows:

| Subject | Minumum Entry Grade | Criteria if not studied at GCSE |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Arabic | B | Writing & speaking test with Head of Department to check fluency |
| Art | B | Examples of own work & interview with HOD |
| Biology | B in Additional Science or B grade in Biology at Triple Science | |
| Business Studies | B | B in English or Mathematics |
| Chemistry | B in Additional Science or B grade in Chemistry at Triple Science and B grade in Mathematics | |
| Computer Science | B | At least a B grade in Computer Science at GCSE. Can not take the course if not studied Computer Science previously as the starting point of A level is the end point of GCSE. |
| Core Mathematics | B | External Candidates joining us from the IGCSE curriculum will also be required to take a GCSE non-calculator examination on application. |
| Design Technology/Food Technology | B | Interview with HOD to determine understanding of the design process and C in Science. |
| Drama & Theatre Studies | B | B in English or Creative Arts and an interview with the HOD showing practical experience |
| Economics | B | If Business Studies has been taken at GCSE then a grade B is needed. If neither Business Studies nor Economics has been taken then a grade B in English and Mathematics is preferred. |
| English Language | B | |
| English Literature | B | |
| French | B | Writing & speaking test with Head of Department to check fluency |



Entry Criteria to Year 12 at DESC

The minimum entry criteria to gain entrance to Dubai English Speaking College Sixth Form is 5 subjects at Grade A*- C. Entry criteria for specific subjects are as follows:

| Subject | Minimum GCSE Grade | Criteria if not studied at GCSE |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Geography | B | B grade in English or History |
| Government and Politics | B | B grade in English or History |
| History | B | B in English |
| Mathematics | A | External Candidates joining us from the IGCSE curriculum will also be required to take a GCSE non-calculator examination on application. |
| Further Maths | A* | Further Mathematics GCSE 180+ marks or equivalent only (top end GCSE A*). |
| Media Studies | B | B grade in English Language or Literature |
| Music | B | Grade V Associated Board/Trinity on an orchestral instrument or voice, and Grade III Theory. An audition and interview with HOD is also required. |
| Music Tech | B | Grade V Associated Board/Trinity on an orchestral instrument or voice, and Grade III Theory. An audition and interview with HOD is also required. |
| PE | B | B grade in Biology or Additional Science |
| Physics | B in Additional Science or B in Physics at Triple Science and B grade in Mathematics | |
| Psychology | B | B grade in Mathematics & English |
| Spanish | B | Writing & speaking test with Head of Department to check fluency |
| BTEC—Entrepreneurship & Enterprise | 5 GCSE's at grade C or above | |
| BTEC-ICT | GCSE ICT at grade C or above | Would consider a student who has not taken ICT, but has achieved A-C in English and Mathematics. |
| BTEC—Sport | 5 GCSE's at grade C or above | Genuine interest in sport, evidence of playing sport. |



Admissions Timeline

| Date | Item |
|--|---|
| Wednesday 9 December 2015 | Sixth Form Open Evening |
| Thursday 7 th January 2016 | Sixth Form Intentions Form handed in from all DESC Year 11 students |
| Sunday 10 th January 2016 | Sixth Form Applications officially open. Applications forms will be available on the DESC website for external students |
| Sunday 17 th January 2015 – Thursday 21 st January 2016 | Year 11 Mock examinations |
| Sunday 24 th January 2016 – Thursday 11 th February 2016 | Internal Guidance Interviews based on Sixth Form intentions and mock examination results |
| Tuesday 1 st March 2016 | Application deadline for Internal & External candidates |
| Sunday 6 th March 2016 | Begin the interview cycle of external applicants |
| Sunday 4 th April 2016 | Sixth Form offers for external candidates will start to be made |
| Thursday 18 th August 2016 | A Level results day |
| Thursday 25 th August 2016 | Year 11 results day, all places must be confirmed by 3pm UAE time |

* Please note that all Sixth Form places need to be confirmed in writing or by email by 3pm UAE time on Thursday 25th August 2016, otherwise your place maybe allocated to another student and your deposit forfeited.



Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q. What if two of my subject choices are in the same column?

A. We aim to enable as many students as possible to take their first choice subject. If your choice of subjects is not available, please e-mail sixthformsupport@descdubai.com and we will look into your concern. Obviously it is impossible for every student to be guaranteed their first choice, but on the whole most students are happy with their final options at the beginning of Year 12.

Q. How can I choose my subjects when I don't know what I want to do in the future?

A. Many students claim that they know what career they want to pursue, only to change their minds the following year. Although it is useful to have a clear idea, it is much better to pursue subjects that you enjoy and that you can do well in. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses and making decisions which are informed and realistic is part of being a Sixth Form student. If you are not good in Mathematics and Science, then choosing to pursue a career in medicine would be foolish, however attractive the prestige of being a doctor seems. In short, know your strengths and play to them!

Q. Can I study a subject that I have not studied at GCSE?

A. Some students have successfully studied A level courses that they have not studied previously, although the decision to do so is one which must be considered carefully in consultation with the appropriate members of staff. The final outcome, however, is decided at your enrolment interview.

Q. Can I change courses during the academic year?

A. Making informed and carefully considered choices before you choose your A level or BTEC courses is crucial to ensure that you are studying the most appropriate subjects. Any change beyond this stage is not recommended, however students will be allowed to swop subjects up to the end of September in the first term. This must be requested using the appropriate form.

Q. How much harder are 'A' levels, compared with GCSEs?

A. The 'A' Level stands for 'Advanced', so all subjects at this level are significantly more challenging. Many students undergo a period of transition in the first couple of months of Year 12. All staff, however, are aware of this and can help you develop your expertise within that subject. Obviously the higher your GCSE result the more manageable you will find an advanced level course. Having to cope with disappointments is something that we have to face sometime in our lives. Crucially all students are encouraged to have a 'plan B'. If this fails, staff will be able to advise you regarding possible options.

If you have any questions that are not answered here, please contact us and we will be happy to answer them for you.





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