



Polwhele House School

GCSE Options Booklet

2026





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Core Subjects



English Language

AQA

Overview

In Years 10 and 11, students will develop essential reading and writing skills to prepare for their GCSE examinations. They will learn to analyse a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, exploring how writers use language and structure to create meaning and influence readers. Students will also practise comparing different viewpoints and perspectives.

Writing skills are a key focus, with opportunities to develop creative narratives and descriptive pieces, as well as transactional texts such as articles, letters and speeches. Accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and grammar is emphasised throughout.

Assessment

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| <p>Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing <i>50% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Section A - Reading: Candidates answer four compulsory questions based on an unseen literature fiction text. <i>Total of 40 marks</i></p> <p>Section B - Writing: Candidates complete one extended writing task which will be either descriptive or narrative in nature. <i>Total of 40 marks</i></p> |
| <p>Paper 2: Writer's Viewpoints and perspectives <i>50% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Section A - Reading: Candidates will answer four compulsory questions based on one unseen non-fiction text and one unseen literary non-fiction text. <i>Total of 40 marks</i></p> <p>Section B - Writing: Candidates complete one extended writing task which will be to present a viewpoint. <i>Total of 40 marks</i></p> |

English Literature

AQA

Overview

Over Years 10 and 11, students will explore a range of classic and modern texts, developing analytical and interpretative skills that deepen their understanding of literature.

The course includes the study of a Shakespeare play, a 19th-century novel, a modern drama or prose text and a collection of poetry. Students will learn to analyse themes, characters and language, considering how writers convey ideas and influence readers. They will also practise comparing poems and responding to unseen poetry with confidence. Emphasis is placed on constructing well-supported, critical essays and expressing ideas clearly under timed conditions.

Assessment

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| <p>Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th Century novel <i>40% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Section A: Candidates will answer a question on 'Macbeth'. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from the play and then to write about the play as a whole.</p> <p>Section B: Candidates answer a question on 'A Christmas Carol'. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from the text and write about the text as a whole.</p> |
| <p>Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry <i>60% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Section A - Modern Texts: Candidates answer one question, from a choice of two, on a chosen play.</p> <p>Section B - Poetry: Candidates will answer one comparative question on one poem and one other poem from the 'Power and Conflict' anthology cluster.</p> <p>Section C - Unseen poetry: Candidates will answer one question on one unseen poem and one question comparing this poem with a second unseen poem.</p> |

Combined Science: Trilogy

AQA

Overview

AQA GCSE Combined Science: Trilogy is a double award qualification that covers Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Students will study key scientific concepts such as cell biology, chemical reactions and energy transfer, while developing practical skills through required experiments. This course provides a strong foundation for understanding the world around us and prepares students for a wide range of future pathways, including A-level sciences.

At the end of Year 11, students will sit six exams (two for each science), and their combined performance will result in two GCSE grades.

Assessment

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| Biology Paper 1 <i>16.7% of GCSE</i> | Biology topics 1–4: Cell Biology; Organisation; Infection and response; and Bioenergetics. |
| Biology Paper 2 <i>16.7% of GCSE</i> | Biology topics 5–7: Homeostasis and response; Inheritance, variation and evolution; and Ecology. |
| Chemistry Paper 1 <i>16.7% of GCSE</i> | Chemistry topics 8–12: Atomic structure and the periodic table; Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter; Quantitative chemistry; Chemical changes; and Energy changes. |
| Chemistry Paper 2 <i>16.7% of GCSE</i> | Chemistry topics 13–17: The rate and extent of chemical change; Organic chemistry; Chemical analysis; Chemistry of the atmosphere; and Using resources. |

| Assessment continued | |
|--|--|
| Physics Paper 1 <i>16.7% of GCSE</i> | Physics topics 18–21: Energy; Electricity; Particle model of matter; and Atomic structure. |
| Physics Paper 2 <i>16.7% of GCSE</i> | Physics topics 22–24: Forces; Waves; and Magnetism and electromagnetism |

For students with a strong interest and aptitude in Science, there is the option to study separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. This pathway provides individual grades for each subject. To cover the additional content, extra Science lessons are scheduled, which counts as one of their option choices.

Mathematics

Edexcel

Overview

In Years 10 and 11, students build on the key mathematical concepts introduced earlier in the school, including number, algebra, geometry and data handling. They also develop their ability to apply these ideas to solve problems in unfamiliar contexts—an essential skill for success in GCSE Mathematics.

Non-calculator skills remain an important part of the course. Students will continue to practise the four operations (+, −, ×, ÷) and work confidently with fractions, decimals, percentages and ratio. They will also learn to use a scientific calculator effectively, showing all steps in their working and making sensible decisions about rounding answers.

Assessment

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| <p>Paper 1- Non-calculator 33.33% of GCSE</p> | <p>Overview of content: 1. Number 2. Algebra 3. Ratio, proportion and rates of change 4. Geometry and measures 5. Probability 6. Statistics</p> |
| <p>Paper 2- Calculator 33.33% of GCSE</p> | <p>Overview of content: 1. Number 2. Algebra 3. Ratio, proportion and rates of change 4. Geometry and measures 5. Probability 6. Statistics</p> |
| <p>Paper 3- Calculator 33.33% of GCSE</p> | <p>Overview of content: 1. Number 2. Algebra 3. Ratio, proportion and rates of change 4. Geometry and measures 5. Probability 6. Statistics</p> |

Option Subjects



Agriculture

Cambridge IGCSE

Overview

Cambridge IGCSE Agriculture is taught as an applied science, giving students the chance to develop core agricultural knowledge and practical skills. The course builds students' ability to use scientific methods when studying areas such as:

- Crop and livestock husbandry
- Farm structures and machinery
- Agricultural economics

Students gain insight into farming and rural development in Cornwall and beyond. They explore how improved agricultural practices can boost food security, protect the environment, support the economy, and promote human health through the production of nutritious food.

The syllabus is organised into ten topics that encourage a broad, practical and science-based understanding of agriculture. These include: general agriculture; soils; plant growth; crop production and protection; livestock anatomy, physiology, production and health; pasture management; livestock and crop breeding; and farm structures, tools and machinery.

Assessment

Paper 1: Theory

1 hour 45 minutes

70% of IGCSE

This paper consists of short, structured and extended-response questions assessing the full subject content from the ten topics listed above. Questions test students' knowledge and understanding, as well as their ability to handle information and solve problems.

Component 2: Practical Coursework

30% of IGCSE

Candidates complete at least four practical exercises during the course, along with a practical investigation. Assessment is internal and externally moderated.

Art & Design

AQA

Overview

GCSE Art and Design encourages students to develop creativity, confidence, and strong practical skills across a range of media.

Students explore drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and mixed media while learning how to express ideas visually. They investigate artists and designers to inspire and inform their work, and they experiment with materials to develop personal, meaningful outcomes.

Throughout the course, students build independent thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability to record and refine their ideas. Art and Design also provides a strong foundation for further creative study.

Students are assessed on their ability to:

1. **Develop** ideas through investigations informed by artists and designers.
2. **Experiment** with a variety of materials, techniques, and processes.
3. **Record** observations through drawing, annotation, and photography.
4. **Produce** a personal and meaningful final outcome.

Assessment

| Assessment | |
|---|--|
| <p>Component 1: Coursework Portfolio 60% of GCSE</p> | <p>The portfolio is a collection of work produced over the course, including sketchbooks, experiments, research and a fully developed project. It shows each student's creative journey, highlighting progress, refinement of technique and independent decision-making. The portfolio also demonstrates their ability to respond to themes and make clear links between research, experimentation and final outcomes.</p> |
| <p>Component 2: Coursework Portfolio 40% of GCSE</p> | <p>Component 2 is an externally set assignment in which students respond to a theme provided by the exam board. They develop preparatory work and then create a final piece during a supervised 10-hour exam. It assesses their ability to produce a personal response, link research to outcomes, and work independently within a set timeframe.</p> |

Computer Science

AQA

Overview

AQA GCSE Computer Science equips students with a strong understanding of how technology works and the principles behind computing. The course covers key areas such as programming, algorithms, data representation and computer systems, helping students develop problem-solving and logical thinking skills.

Through practical coding tasks and theoretical study, learners gain confidence in creating solutions and understanding the impact of technology on society. This subject is ideal for those interested in innovation and digital careers, providing a solid foundation for further study in computing or related fields.

Assessment

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| <p>Paper 1: Computational thinking and programming skills <i>50% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Computational thinking, code tracing, problem-solving, programming concepts including the design of effective algorithms and the designing, writing, testing and refining of code. The content for this assessment will be drawn from subject content 3.1 and 3.2: 3.1 Fundamentals of algorithms 3.2 Programming</p> |
| <p>Paper 2: Computing concepts <i>50% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>The content for this assessment will be drawn from subject content 3.3 to 3.8: 3.3 Fundamentals of data representation 3.4 Computer systems 3.5 Fundamentals of computer networks 3.6 Cyber security 3.7 Relational databases and structured query language (SQL) 3.8 Ethical, legal and environmental impacts of digital technology on wider society, including issues of privacy</p> |

French

Edexcel

Overview

In Years 10 and 11, students will continue to develop their skills in listening to, speaking, reading and writing French. They will build on previous learning to extend their knowledge of a range of topic areas and grammar. The course also includes the study of cultural topics in France and French-speaking countries. Students are taught to express their opinions on a wide range of subject areas, and to express themselves using a variety of tenses. A GCSE in French is highly regarded on university applications and by employers.

The topics covered in the GCSE course are:

Family and friends – identity, friendship, role models, celebrations

Media and technology – online activities, online safety, TV and film

Studying and my future – school, future plans, jobs

Lifestyle and wellbeing – physical and mental health, meals and food, illness

Travel and tourism – holidays, festivals, transport

My neighbourhood – describing your town or village, homes, directions, shopping

The environment – geography, environmental problems and solutions

Assessment

At the end of the GCSE course, students will sit four exams. Each is sat at either foundation or higher level, and all four have to be taken at the same level. Each exam is worth 25% of the overall grade.

Speaking: this will be 1-1 with the teacher, and includes preparation time

Listening

Reading (including translation into English)

Writing (including translation into French)

Geography

AQA

Overview

AQA GCSE Geography offers students an engaging and practical understanding of the world around them. The course explores key themes such as physical landscapes, human environments and the challenges of managing resources. Students develop essential skills in data analysis, decision-making and fieldwork, preparing them for further study and a wide range of careers.

Geography not only deepens knowledge of global issues like climate change and urbanisation but also encourages critical thinking about how we interact with our planet.

Assessment

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| <p>Paper 1: Living with the physical environment <i>35% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>3.1.1 The challenge of natural hazards 3.1.2 The living world 3.1.3 Physical landscapes in the UK 3.4 Geographical skills</p> |
| <p>Paper 2: Challenges in the human environment <i>35% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>3.2.1 Urban issues and challenges 3.2.2 The changing economic world 3.2.3 The challenge of resource management 3.4 Geographical skills</p> |
| <p>Paper 3: Geographical applications <i>30% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>3.3.1 Issue evaluation 3.3.2 Fieldwork 3.4 Geographical skills</p> |

Overview

History has shaped today's world and tomorrow's future. In studying the past and its people, history students learn a range of skills: excellent communication and writing skills; how to construct an argument; research skills; investigation and problem-solving skills and analytical and interpretation skills.

We adhere to the AQA specification for GCSE History consisting of two separate exam papers, each one lasting 2 hours. Each exam paper accounts for 50% of the final GCSE grade and is worth a total of 84 marks.

Paper 1: Understanding the modern world

Section A: Period studies

Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and dictatorship

This study explores Germany's turbulent half-century of change, marked by the rise and fall of both democracy and Nazism. Students examine the political, economic, social and cultural factors driving these developments, the ideas that influenced them, and the key individuals and groups who shaped - and were shaped by - this period.

1. Germany and the growth of democracy
2. Germany and the Depression
3. The experiences of Germans under the Nazis

Section B: Wider world depth studies

Conflict & tension: the inter-war years, 1918–1939

This depth study helps students understand the varied interests of individuals, states and Great Powers. It examines national self-determination, internationalism and challenges to the peace settlement, focusing on the causes of the Second World War and why conflict arose and persisted. It also considers the roles of key individuals and groups in shaping - and being shaped by - international relations.

1. Peace-making
2. The League of Nations and international peace
3. Origins & outbreak of the Second World War

Paper 2: Shaping the nation

Section A: Thematic studies

Power and the people: c. 1170 to the present day

This thematic study will enable students to gain an understanding of the development of the relationship between the citizen and the state in Britain over a long period of time. It considers the causes, scale, nature and consequences of protest to that relationship. By charting the journey from feudalism and serfdom to democracy and equality, it reveals how, in different periods, the state responds to challenges to its authority and their impact. It allows students to construct an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of the citizen.

1. Challenging authority and feudalism
2. Challenging royal authority
3. Reform and reformers
4. Equality and rights

Section B: British depth studies including the historic environment

Medieval England - the reign of Edward I, 1272–1307

This option allows students to study in depth Medieval England and the reign of Edward I. The depth study will focus on the major events of the reign of Edward considered from economic, religious, political, social and cultural standpoint, and arising contemporary and historical controversies.

1. Government, the rights of King and people
2. Life in Medieval England
3. Edward I's military campaigns in Wales and Scotland
4. The historic environment of Medieval England

Performing Arts

Pearson

Overview

BTEC Level 2 Performing Arts – Acting Pathway is a practical and creative course for students who enjoy drama and performing. You will explore different theatre styles, develop acting techniques through workshops and rehearsals, and take part in exciting performances.

Assessment is through practical work, projects, and written reflections, with one externally assessed unit. This course helps you build confidence, teamwork, and communication skills, and is a great stepping stone to Level 3 Performing Arts, A-level Drama or careers in the creative industry.

Assessment

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| <p>Component 1- Exploring the Performing Arts</p> <p><i>33.33% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Non-exam internal assessment set by Pearson, marked by the centre and moderated by Pearson. The Pearson-set Assignment will be completed in approximately 12 hours of supervised assessment. 60 marks.</p> |
| <p>Component 2- Developing Skills and Techniques in the Performing Arts</p> <p><i>33.3% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Non-exam internal assessment set by Pearson, marked by the centre and moderated by Pearson. The Pearson-set Assignment will be completed in approximately 15 hours of supervised assessment. 60 marks.</p> |
| <p>Component 3- Responding to a Brief</p> <p><i>33.3% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>Task set and marked by Pearson completed under supervised conditions. Learners will be given the set task in January, 12 weeks before the supervised assessment period, in order to carry out the development of creative ideas and rehearsal for the workshop performance. The set task will be completed in 3 hours within the period timetabled by Pearson. 60 marks.</p> |

Physical Education

AQA

Overview

The Physical Education GCSE course develops students' understanding of how the body works, the benefits of an active lifestyle, and key issues in modern sport, while also allowing them to be assessed in sports they enjoy and perform well in. Examinations take place at the end of Year 11, with practical moderation usually held in the spring term.

The written papers require students to answer all questions and include a mixture of multiple-choice, short-answer and extended-response questions.

Assessment

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| <p>Paper 1: The human body and movement in physical activity and sport</p> <p>1 hour 15 minutes</p> <p><i>30% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>What's assessed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied anatomy and physiology • Movement analysis • Physical training • Use of data |
| <p>Paper 2: Socio-cultural influences and well-being in physical activity and sport</p> <p>1 hour 15 minutes</p> <p><i>30% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>What's assessed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports psychology • Socio-cultural influences • Health, fitness and well-being • Use of data |
| <p>Non-exam assessment: Practical performance in physical activity and sport</p> <p>Assessed by teachers Moderated by AQA</p> <p><i>40% of GCSE</i></p> | <p>What's assessed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical performance in three different physical activities in the role of player/performer (one in a team activity, one in an individual activity and a third in either a team or in an individual activity). • Analysis and evaluation of performance to bring about improvement in one activity. |

PSHE

PSHE is a statutory part of the curriculum for all students in Years 10 and 11. It is not a GCSE subject, but it plays a vital role in preparing young people for life beyond school.

Through PSHE lessons, students develop essential knowledge, skills and attributes to manage their lives now and in the future.

The curriculum covers key areas such as:

- Health and Wellbeing – understanding physical and mental health, making informed choices and managing stress.
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) – learning about healthy relationships, respect, consent and staying safe.
- Living in the Wider World – exploring financial education, careers guidance, and preparation for life after school.

PSHE supports students' personal development, helps them make safe and informed decisions, and contributes to their success in education and employment.



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