



A Levels at Southend High School for Boys

Facts you need to know

- All students will have the opportunity of studying four subjects at A Level.
- We will do our utmost to accommodate your A Level choices. However, we do ask you to choose two “reserve” subjects which you would be happy to study in the unlikely event that we are unable to offer you one of your first four (This could be due to a course not running, or being full).
- You will find you have more independent study time as you concentrate on a smaller number of subjects.
- You may decide to study an EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) alongside your A Levels.
- You can expect an increase in difficulty compared to GCSEs.
- There will be differences in the way you are taught and what is expected from you.
- Predicted grades are based on internal exams held at the end of the summer term. When students are researching their university choices, it is important that they make sensible decisions according to their predicted grades and we appreciate parental support in this matter.



Things to consider when choosing your A Levels

You may or may not have plans for your future. It is perfectly normal not to know what you want to do for a career, or what you want to study at university. Many graduates go on to work in fields unrelated to their chosen degree. However, if you do have aspirations for a certain career, you will need to take a related degree. For example, subjects such as Law, Medicine, Architecture and Veterinary Science will all need specific qualifications. Degree/Higher Apprenticeships may also require attainment in certain subjects.

If you already know what you want to study at university or the career you wish to pursue

Knowing what you want to do once you leave school puts you in a good position when choosing your A Levels. Your first step should be to check entry requirements on university websites for your chosen course and/or employer requirements for careers/apprenticeships

A lot of university courses will specify at least one subject you will need to have studied at A Level. For example, Medicine, Veterinary Science and certain Engineering courses may need three specific subjects. Also some universities publish a list of preferred A Level subjects that are acceptable for general admission, as well as specific requirements for individual courses.



If you don't know what you want to study at university or what career you can see yourself in

You may not be sure what you want to study at university, or if you want to go at all. Don't worry, you can look to study a broad range of A Levels that will keep all options open for you.



There are eight 'facilitating' subjects suggested by Russell Group universities to help you keep your degree options open until you decide which course to take:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- English Literature
- Geography
- History
- Maths and Further Maths
- Modern and Classical Languages
- Physics



Taking at least one of these subjects will keep a wide range of degrees/career paths open to you. Make sure you still choose subjects you like – you will be studying them for the next two years.

If you are still uncertain, university admission teams are always willing to give advice, they can usually be contacted by email or phone.

Other factors to consider when choosing A Levels

- What you are good at – your career or degree plans may change so make sure you choose subjects you can do well in
- What you enjoy – if you don't enjoy a subject at A Level but need it for a specific university course, you might want to reconsider your degree preference
- Your subject combination – if you are taking a science A Level, for example, you should consider whether you need to look at taking another science or maths subject
- The syllabus – knowing the course content should tell you whether a particular A Level is the right option for you
- The workload you can handle – for example, some courses may involve a lot of essay writing, so be realistic about how much work you can do.
- Some subject combinations at SHSB are not permitted, please refer to the prospectus for more details [Sixth Form Prospectus 2026](#)

University courses with specific requirements

Course entry requirements are used to help admissions staff at universities pick students for their courses. Many courses will have more applicants than places so they will set an entry requirement to allow them to reduce the number of students to consider.

Specific course requirements (e.g. Chemistry and Biology for a Biochemistry course) are there to make sure students can cope with the pressures of the course content itself. The majority of university courses look for at least Cs in GCSE English and Maths. Some courses go further and list specific subjects and grades they expect you to have.

Oxbridge requirements

Please bear in mind recent changes to Medicine at Oxford or Cambridge, where Chemistry and 2 other STEM A-Levels are now required (not incl. Psychology) for most Colleges. There is a small handful of Colleges that will still accept Chemistry and 1 other STEM A-Level. Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology also now requires 3 STEM subjects at A-Level including Maths and Chemistry for all Colleges.

Keep in mind

- Some universities discourage students from taking certain combinations of A Levels – this tends to be for very similar subjects such as Business Studies and Economics.
- Highly selective courses such as Medicine may state that A Levels should be taken in the same sitting after no more than two years of study – this can affect you if you're looking to repeat some exams after sixth form or if you've taken some exams early.

More Information

For more information about entry requirements please see:

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses>

<https://www.ucas.com/>

<https://www.gov.uk/become-apprentice>

