

How to choose the right subjects at GCSE and A-level

By Jake Burnett,
Vice-Principal,
Cambridge Tutors College,
London, UK

jakeburnett@ctc.ac.uk

www.ctc.ac.uk



Formerly Head of English,
West Island School, Pokfulam
(1996-2008) – an ESF School

GCSE

What is it?

What is an **I**GCSE?

How is it assessed?

Which subjects are offered?

How does it compare with
HKCEE?

GCSE

media studies

history

French

music

physical

education

Japanese

art

psychology

accounting

Spanish

chemistry

English language

mathematics

biology

ICT

religious education

business studies

geography

drama

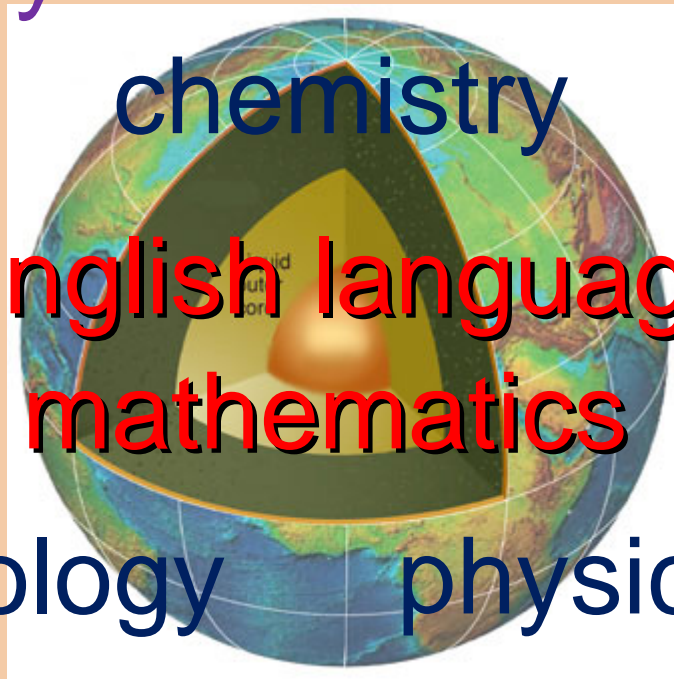
law

Chinese

design

technology

English literature



GCSE



The key to GCSE selection is **depth** and **breadth** as it is likely that students will be allowed to choose between 5 and 12 subjects to study.

It is also vital to do some research about the next steps you might want to take at A level and beyond. And don't forget desire and enjoyment!

But keep the right doors open for each individual.



GCSE

For example:

- ✓ To study at HKU you must have sat at least six GCSEs in one sitting
- ✓ To gain a place on a post-graduate course to become a qualified teacher you must have English and mathematics at a C or above
- ✓ To study medicine you should have A* or A grades in all three sciences, mathematics and English
- ✓ Admission to Oxbridge relies on all A* or A grades at GCSE (as well as many other factors)
- ✓ To study medicine at Birmingham University you must have 6 A* grades
- ✓ You do not need to have studied the GCSE to take the subject at 'A' level in some subjects e.g. law, economics but in others it is very important e.g. mathematics, the sciences

GCSE

	Medicine	Finance / Business	Law	Engineering
Core	English, mathematics	English, mathematics	English, mathematics	English, mathematics
Science and Technologies	chemistry, biology, physics	chemistry, biology	physics	physics, chemistry, biology
Arts	Music, English literature	art, media studies	English literature	Media studies, art
Languages	Japanese	French	Spanish, Chinese	German
Humanities	history, psychology	economics, geography	history, business studies	geography
Total	10	9	8	9

GCE

What is it?

How is it assessed?

Which subjects are offered?

How many A levels are taken?

How does it compare with Hong
Kong A levels?

GCE

media studies
history Spanish business studies
French chemistry geography
music mathematics
physical English literature law drama
education Japanese ICT art Chinese
biology physics design
psychology English language technology
accounting religious education

GCE

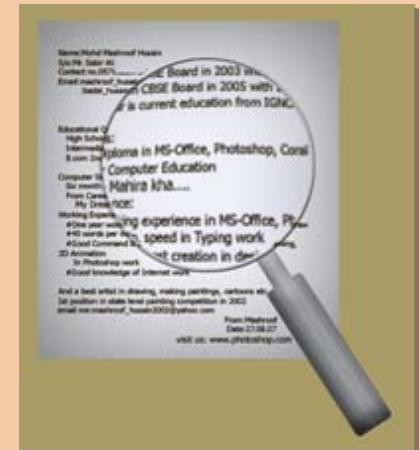


The key to GCE A level selection is making choices which will **allow further study at university** whilst students are able to show that they can meet the academic challenges each subject presents.

Some subjects naturally compliment each other e.g.

chemistry and biology or **physics and mathematics** or **history and English literature**

The GCE A level system helps to focus academic study in a particular direction.



'Hard' and 'Soft' Subjects?

www.policyexchange.org.uk

'Non-preferred Subjects' – Cambridge and LSE

accounting, art and design, business studies, design and technology, drama, theatre studies, home economics, ICT, media studies, (law)

'Traditional Subjects'

English literature, history, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, further mathematics, geography, French, Spanish, Latin, economics

But there are others...

GCE

For example:

- ✓ To gain entrance in one of the best UK universities you start with an expectation of 3 A grades and 1 AS (some ask for unit scores)
- ✓ Further mathematics is highly valued for any mathematics based course – few students take this very challenging subject
- ✓ To study medicine you must have studied chemistry, mathematics and two other ‘academic’ subjects
- ✓ Some universities do not want an A level in a subject to be studied at degree level, e.g. law, economics
- ✓ The new A* grade is yet untested
- ✓ You do not need to have studied the GCE to take the subject at university in some subjects e.g. business studies but in others it is vital e.g. mathematics, humanities, languages

GCE

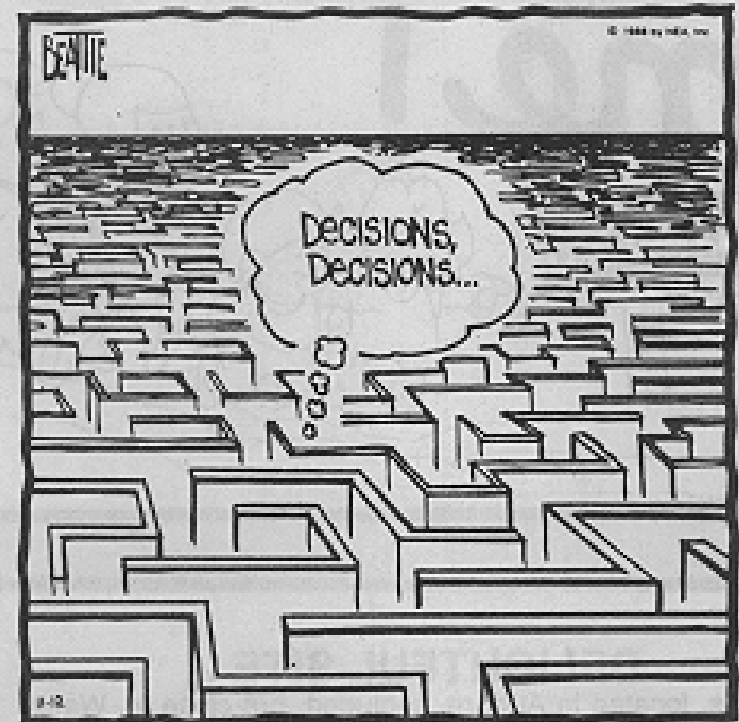
	Medicine	Finance / Business	Law	Engineering
Choice 1	chemistry	mathematics	English literature	mathematics
Choice 2	mathematics	physics	history	physics
Choice 3	physics or biology	further mathematics	French, German or Spanish	further mathematics
Choice 4 (AS level?) One from this list	French, geography, history, English literature, economics	statistics, psychology, economics, Japanese, history	psychology, mathematics, business studies, economics	art, geography


In making any choice...

Ideally, you should be aiming for something between these two...



SNAFU® by Bruce Beattie





**How to choose
the right
subjects at
GCSE and
A-Level**

**By
Bosworth
Independent
College**

GCSE Subjects (Form 4 & 5)

- **Maths**
- **Sciences (Bio, Chem, Phy)**
- **Business Studies**
- **Geography**
- **ICT**
- **Art**
- **EFL**



A-Level Subjects (Form 6 & 7)

- **Accounting**
- **Art**
- **Biology**
- **Business Studies**
- **Chemistry**
- **Computing**
- **Economics**
- **Further Maths**
- **Geography**
- **Law**
- **Maths**
- **Physics**
- **Psychology**
- **Sociology**

Soft A-Level Subjects

<i>A levels</i>		<i>IB</i>
• Accounting	• Information and Communication Technology	• Business and Management
• Art and Design	• Leisure Studies	• Design and Technology
• Business Studies	• Media Studies	• Information Technology in a Global Society
• Communication Studies	• Music Technology	• Theatre Arts
• Dance	• Performance Studies	• Visual Arts
• Design and Technology	• Performing Arts	http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/requirements/
• Drama/Theatre Studies	• Photography	
• Film Studies	• Physical Education	
• Health and Social Care	• Sports Studies	
• Home Economics	• Travel and Tourism	

How Many to Choose

- Minimum 3 A-Level + 1 AS subjects
- Overseas Students:
 - 3 Subjects + EFL (AS Year)
 - 3 Subjects + 1 AS subject (A2 Year)
- For Example:
 - Maths, Econ, Phy & **EFL** (AS Year)
 - Maths, Econ, Phy & **F Maths** (A2 Year)

What to Choose

- Do you know which degree you would like to study at university?
- If your answer is NO
 - Subjects Interest
 - Academic Strengths
 - Possible Career
- If your answer is YES
 - Maths, ???, ???, ???



What to Choose

- **Business / Economics / Finance**
 - Maths, F Maths, Econ, Bio, Chem, Phy, Business Studies / Accounting
- **Engineering**
 - Maths, F maths, Phy + ???
- **Medicine**
 - Maths, Bio, Chem, ??? + **BMAT & Interview**
www.bmat.org.uk
- **Law**
 - Maths, Chem, Phy, Econ, Law + **LNAT**
www.lnat.ac.uk
- **IELTS**

