

Biology Options Evening

FAQs

- **Which GCSEs are needed to take Biology?**

What is required to take the course is GCSE Biology at Grade 7 or above. Ideally you should also have Maths and Chemistry at a good grade, preferably Grade 7 as this will ensure you have a good foundation of knowledge on which to base your learning.

- **How many pupils are in each class?**

There are three Biology Classes in Year 1 and another three in Year 2. The maximum number of pupils for each class is 25. We currently have about 65 pupils taking the first year of the Biology class, which means the classes are between about 18 and 24 pupils on average.

- **Are there a limited number of spaces on the course?**

With three classes in each year group, the maximum number of students we could take per year would be 75. We usually have about 65 pupils each year.

- **Are there two teachers for the course?**

Yes, there are two teachers for each class who split the topics between them. All of the Biology staff teach the A Level course.

- **Are the classes streamed?**

No, all classes are mixed ability at A Level.

- **Is there any coursework?**

There is not coursework as such, but there are 12 Core Practicals required to pass the Practical Endorsement aspect of the course. These are done in class, written up carefully and teacher assessed. If pupils achieve all of the required skills, then they are awarded a Pass for the Practical Endorsement which is recorded next to their grade on their Exam Certificate. The material covered in the practicals will also be examined in the end of course exam papers.

- **Do many people fail the Practical Endorsement?**

Pupils are given a number of opportunities throughout the practical aspect of the course to meet the skills required for a pass. If a pupil takes part in all of the practicals and writes them up following the guidelines, then they will almost certainly achieve all of those skills.

In the past four years, only two pupils have failed the Practical Endorsement and there were specific reasons for these.

- **What are the average grades achieved in Biology?**

Last year was slightly different as the grades were all Teacher Assessed due to the pandemic. The average grades across the previous four years were 44% achieving an A* or A Grade, and 70% achieving an A*-B Grade.

- **What is the recommended grade in GCSE Maths to take A Level Biology?**

It is recommended that pupils have a Grade 7 or above in Maths as the assessment of the A Level Biology is 10% Higher Level GCSE Maths (10% of the marks available in the exam will be Maths based), plus some additional statistical tests. This is taught throughout the course, but it is important that the pupils are confident to use their mathematical skills.

- **How much overlap is there between Biology and Maths/Chemistry/PE/Psychology?**

There is certainly some overlap with each of these A Level and they complement each other nicely in terms of content. However, it is not necessary to study any of these A Level to take A Level Biology.

- **Do you need to study A Level Chemistry or A Level Maths to do A Level Biology?**

These A Levels both complement the Biology course nicely and a number of students do take these alongside Biology. However, it is not necessary to take these courses and we have students who take a much more eclectic set of A Levels with Biology.

- **Should you take Biology because you need it for higher education or because you enjoy doing it?**

You should always take A Levels in subjects that you enjoy as you are far more likely to engage with the content and be actively engaged in the independent learning to broaden your understanding. You can use university prospectuses on line to research which A Levels are relevant if you want to take a specific course and they could help you make your choices, but remember two years is a long time to be studying something that you don't enjoy.

- **How many students go on to take Biology at University?**

Approximately 40 – 60% of students studying A Level Biology go on to take a biology-related course at University, anything from Medicine and Biomedical Sciences to Physiotherapy, Forensic sciences, Conservation and many others.