

## Sixth Form Information Evening Academic Information

The transition from GCSE to AS level is significant and should not be underestimated. Having said this, in the past girls have enjoyed the challenges that this presents to them and have enjoyed studying a smaller number of subjects to a greater depth. The AS level year is a fast and furious one. The first set of external examinations for the majority of girls will take place in January 2013, and so it is crucial to hit the ground running at the beginning of the academic year. The bulk of the examinations take place before the summer term half term and so the AS courses are approximately 26 weeks long – half an actual year! This is one of the main reasons that we strongly discourage girls from changing schools at the sixth form stage. At Roedean, staff know and understand your daughters and so the transition into the sixth form is seamless and rapid.

Entry into the sixth form at Roedean is based on the strengths of the individual girls and so, unlike a number of other similar schools, we do not ask for a certain number of GCSE passes. Instead, we ask the girls to achieve the required entry criteria for the subjects that they wish to study at AS level. The entry criteria for each subject can be found on pages 4 & 5 of the Sixth Form Curriculum Booklet.

Nationally, the norm is for sixth form students to study 4 AS levels and this is reflected at Roedean. It is sometimes possible to take 5 AS levels, but a programme of 5 AS levels should only be taken on by the very brightest girls. A 5 AS level programme is a heavy load in terms of both timetabled lessons and prep; girls who excel at extra-curricular activities e.g. music or sport should think very carefully before taking this sort of programme on. It is also possible for a girl to take a 3 AS level programme if it is felt that it is in their best interests to do so. University offers range from offers based on 3 A levels only, to offers based on 3 A levels and 1 AS level. On very rare occasions, a university might make a 4 A level offer.

In the past some 6<sub>1</sub> girls have started 5 AS levels in September with a view to dropping one of them. Although this may seem a sensible option, the pressure this brings makes for a rather unhappy start to the sixth form. We dissuade girls from starting 5 AS levels right from the beginning.

Experience shows that an AS programme involving **only** essay-based subjects results in a very heavy work-load.

An AS programme in which more than 2 of the subjects are 'new' subjects (i.e. ones that have not been studied at GCSE level) is not sensible – although there may be exceptions.

A girl should choose subjects they will enjoy and which will give the best possible AS / A level grades. Girls should not be pressured into taking a subject because someone else thinks you should unless they can give you very valid reasons. They should not simply choose what their friends are doing and they should not struggle with a subject for 2 years simply because you like the teacher.

Too many girls say at the beginning of 6<sub>1</sub> 'I wish I had listened to your advice last year'. Please make sure the girls listen and understand that the advice being given is based on experience as is being given in their very best interests.

At the beginning of the Spring term, each U5 girl will have an individual interview with the Head of Sixth Form to finalise her AS level choices. The discussions will be based on each girl's performance in the trial examinations as well as any information from the futurewise programme. At that point, the choice of AS levels is a free one. The AS level blocking system will be written towards the end of the Spring term, based on the choices that the girls have made. We make every effort to accommodate the requests of all girls, but a full guarantee that choices can be met cannot be made. If a girl's choices cannot be met, the Head of Sixth

Form will communicate this to both the girl and her parents as quickly as possible. Once the blocking system has been established, it provides the framework within which any further changes to AS choices must fit.

Subject specific comments:-

**Business Studies & Economics :** The combination of Business Studies & Economics is acceptable at AS level but should not form two choices of a three A level programme. Many good universities (e.g. LSE ) will not count A level Business Studies and A level Economics as 2 separate choices. Girls who do choose to do both AS Economics and AS Business Studies **must** be confident with their other AS levels choices so that they can drop one of Economics or Business Studies at the end of year 12 if necessary.

**Economics:** If you intend to study Economics at university then you must take at least A level Mathematics and you should seriously consider studying Government & Politics as well. Studying an essay based / literary subject may be an advantage, particularly if you are thinking of applying to LSE.

**Mathematics** - GCSE Higher level candidates only are eligible to do AS Mathematics.

**Science** - AS level sciences can be taken by girls currently doing GCSE double science, however, it may be necessary for these girls to do extra work in preparation for the AS level course. Girls considering AS/ A level science should seriously consider AS maths as a support subject. If they feel that they are not capable of AS maths, then they need to consider seriously whether they will cope with the AS science.

**Theatre Studies** - Please note that there is a significant academic element within this course; the course is not simply a practical one.

**English Lit & Lang** course is on offer as well as the **English Literature** course.

**Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry** - applicants **must** do both Chemistry and Biology up to at least AS level. Many Medical schools are looking for breadth of programme, so a contrasting subject, or heavy involvement in e.g. music, may help.

**Engineering** - applicants **must** do Maths and Physics.

**Law** - Law should do traditional A level subjects in which good grades can be achieved. At least one essay based subject is advisable, although not essential.

**Architecture** - all architecture courses require Art at A level.

**Mathematics** - Cambridge prefer applicants to be taking both Further Mathematics and Physics at A level.

**Computing** - Imperial 'like' their candidates to Further Maths and Physics at A level. Pure CompSci degrees do require Maths, however there is a huge variety of courses in the field that do not require Maths. AS / A level Computing is useful but not always essential.