



HARROGATE
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

Year 9 Options Booklet

Key Stage 4: 2026-2028



Year 9 Options

Overview

The Year 9 Options process is a very important stage in the life of every teenager. For the first time they will make key decisions as to which subjects they would like to choose to pursue to GCSE and possibly beyond. This booklet will outline the subjects available as well as explain the qualification and assessment details for each type of course.

There has been a great deal of change in the educational landscape over recent years as new courses and qualifications have been introduced. There were major reforms to GCSEs in 2015, which included a move back to linear courses, where subjects are only examined at the end of the 2-year course, and most GCSE courses are made up of a larger percentage of examination assessment rather than coursework content. Following the recent Curriculum and Assessment review, there are more changes ahead, with a new National Curriculum in 2028. There will be very little change for students currently in Year 9 however, other than some minor changes in certain subject in exams to be taken in the Summer of 2028.



All GCSE courses are graded on a system of number rather than letter grades. These will be on a scale from 1 to 9, with 9 being the best. A grade 5 represents a 'good' pass and a grade 4 represents a 'standard' pass.

If you have any questions regarding specific details of our Key Stage 4 courses, please speak directly to the relevant Faculty Leader who will always have the most up-to-date subject information.



Harrogate Grammar School has an outstanding record in enabling students to make progress significantly beyond the national average.

You will be supported throughout the two years to achieve the best results you can.

Make sure you choose the courses that will lead to the greatest chance of success for you.

Curriculum Choices

The HGS Curriculum

Our priority is to provide courses that will enable students to maximise their potential and enhance their opportunities beyond the age of sixteen of finding the best progression route for them.

There is a common core of subjects which includes:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- Religious Studies
- Core Physical Education (non-examined)

For certain subjects, individual recommendations are made to each student, which are based on all the information we have built up over the past two and a half years, including Cognitive Ability Tests completed in Year 7, progress in the relevant subjects in Years 7-9, learner habits and attainment in the subjects being recommended. These recommendations are identified on the individualised form which is provided to each student.



Recommendations

Modern Languages

For the majority of students, the study of at least one modern language will be compulsory. For some students, the study of a language will be optional. If your recommendation is 'optional', you may still of course opt for a language, if you wish to do so. Some students may also wish to continue with both of their languages.

Geography and History

For the majority of students, the study of either Geography or History will also be compulsory. For some students, this will also be optional, but again, you may still opt for Geography or History, if you wish to do so. Some students may wish to continue with both Geography and History.

Science

You will be directed towards the most appropriate Science course at the end of the summer term, after the end of term CATs. This will be either the Triple Science option, where you study GCSE Biology, Chemistry and Physics separately or the Combined Science option, which equates to two GCSEs. Both routes allow you to continue to study Science at A Level, dependent upon you also meeting the entry requirements of those individual subjects.



What are GCSEs?

What are GCSEs?

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. These are two-year courses graded at 1 to 9, 9 being the highest grade, 5 being the benchmark for a 'good' pass and a 4 being the benchmark for a 'standard' pass. Students are assessed at the end of the course in a final examination. Some courses continue to have a coursework element, although in most cases, this makes up a smaller percentage of the total final mark.



How the new grades compare with the old ones

Old grades	New grades
A*	9
A	8
B	7
C	6
	5 STRONG PASS
	4 STANDARD PASS
D	3
E	2
F	1
G	1
U	U

Source: Ofqual

BBC

What other courses are available?

Cambridge National Award

HGS offers the OCR course in Creative iMedia. This course has a larger coursework element, which makes up 60% of the final assessment. There is one exam worth 40% of the total marks. The course is worth the equivalent of a GCSE grade and is graded as Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*.

Technical Awards

HGS offers two technical awards in Years 10 & 11, the Level 2 Vocational Award in Hospitality & Catering and the Level 2 BTEC Award in Sport. These courses have a larger coursework element, which makes up 60% of the final assessment. There is one exam worth 40% of the total marks. The course is worth the equivalent of a GCSE grade and is graded as Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*.



The English Baccalaureate

We believe in offering a broad and balanced curriculum to all our young people. With this in mind and also taking the context of our students at Harrogate Grammar School into account, we feel that this is the right pathway for the majority of our students to follow an EBACC pathway. This involves studying the core academic subjects listed below. Therefore, the majority of students will be asked to choose these subjects as part of their option choices. They will continue to have **two further option choices**, which can be taken from a wide range on offer. In some exceptional cases, such as to meet their special educational needs, some students may need a bespoke curriculum, which does not include all of these subjects. This will be decided in discussion with learning support and the parents/carers of those children.

Core Academic Subjects

- English
- Maths
- The Sciences (at least two)
- History or Geography
- A foreign language

Key Stage 4 Curriculum 2026-2028

The majority of students will study:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Maths
- Either Triple Science (three GCSEs) or Combined Science (two GCSEs)
- History or Geography
- At least one language from: French, German or Spanish
- Religious Studies

Students will then be able to make two further choices from a variety of other subject areas:

- Geography, History or Sociology in addition
- A second language
- An art or design-based subject: Art, Food and Nutrition, Hospitality and Catering, Design and Technology, Photography
- Computer Science or iMedia
- Music, Drama
- Physical Education or BTEC Sport
- Business Studies

Making Your Choices

What next?

Detailed information about each GCSE subject can be found in this booklet. Please take time to read more about each subject. If you have any questions regarding a subject, please talk to your class teacher or your form tutor.

You can also watch the subject videos which can be found on the [Year 9 options page](#) of the HGS website and also on each subject page within this booklet. These videos provide an overview of each subject to support this booklet.



TIMELINE	DATE
Year 9 Options assembly	Tuesday 9 December
Choices booklet to students	Thursday 11 December
Recommendations email and link to form to students	Monday 12 January
Year 9 Parent Curriculum Choices Presentation Evening (in person)	Thursday 15 January 6.00pm, Main Hall
Year 9 Parent Consultation Evening (remote)	Tuesday 20 January
Deadline for submitting your options form	Monday 26 January

The Recommendation Form

On Monday 12 January, you and your parents will receive an email. This email will include your recommendations for these subjects:

- Humanities – optional or compulsory
- Languages – optional or compulsory

The Year 9 Options Form

The link to the Year 9 Options form will be included in your recommendations email.

Before completing the Year 9 Options form, please talk to your parents about the subjects you would like to choose. Use this booklet and the subject videos to help you choose which subjects you would like to study in Years 10 and 11.

Year 9 Options 2026

Please have your recommendations email to hand when completing this form (emailed to students on Monday 12 January 2026).

Please complete the **whole form** as this will guide you through your four options.

There is no requirement to select:

- Science option of Combined or Triple - details of the recommendation of course is contained within the recommendations email that students received on Monday 12 January.
- English Literature, English Language, Maths and Religious Studies as these are all core subjects

Please complete this form by **Monday 26 January 2026**.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

Please have your recommendations email to hand when completing this form (emailed to students and parents on Wednesday 17 December 2025).

1. Student first name *

Enter your answer

2. Student surname *

Enter your answer

Subject Choices



GCSE Art and Design

Course content

This is an exciting practical course which encourages students to develop personalised creative projects from the following areas of study: painting and drawing, digital photography, 3D and sculpture, mixed media, graphics design, printmaking, textiles and fashion.

Students in Year 10 and 11 will have the opportunity to produce a wide range of projects developing their visual, aesthetic and technical skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of Art and Design. Students will be able to opt to specialise in a single area of study in such areas as photography, painting and drawing, graphics, 3-dimensional design. Students can also opt for a broad course where they can produce work in more than one area. Studies will also be made of relevant artists and designers to support their individual projects.

This course provides a strong foundation for any student wishing to go on to Sixth Form and study Art and Design, Graphics, or Photography at A Level. Students will need to purchase sketchbooks and have access to basic materials for use with home-learning. These can be purchased from school as an art pack. Access to the required equipment should not prevent any student opting for Art and Design, as there are limited funds available to support families experiencing financial difficulty. To gain access to school facilities outside of lessons students can attend weekly GCSE support sessions.



QUALIFICATION

GCSE Art and Design

EXAM BOARD

AQA

Assessment

Unit 1	Portfolio of Work	Controlled assessment 60%
Unit 2	Externally set practical task	10-12 weeks prep and 10hr exam 40%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Art and Design subject video

[Year 9 options Art and Design](#)

GCSE Art and Design - Photography

Course content

This is an exciting practical course which encourages students to develop personalised creative projects. Photography GCSE will involve producing images using light-sensitive materials such as photographic film, or digital methods of development and production to create static or moving images. Students can choose from the following areas of study:

- portraiture
- location photography
- studio photography
- experimental imagery
- installation
- documentary photography
- photojournalism
- moving image: video and animation
- fashion photography

Students have access to a well-equipped studio and a range of equipment, but students opting for GCSE photography need access to a digital SLR camera of their own, as many of the shoots are done on location outside of school hours. Whilst working with an SLR camera is not essential, it is advantageous as the quality of the images are far superior and the technical understanding of photography is more advanced. An introductory level or second-hand digital SLR camera will be fine. Access to the required equipment should not prevent any student opting for Photography, as there are limited funds available to support families experiencing financial difficulty.

This course provides a strong foundation for any students wishing to go on to Sixth Form and study Art and Design, Graphics or Photography at A Level.



QUALIFICATION

EXAM BOARD

GCSE Art and Design Photography

AQA

Assessment

Unit 1	Portfolio of Work	Controlled assessment 60%
Unit 2	Externally set practical task	10-12 weeks prep and 10hr exam 40%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Photography subject video

[Year 9 options: Art and Design Photography](#)



GCSE Business Studies

Course content

You will be introduced to the world of small businesses and will look at what makes someone a successful business person. You will find out how to develop an idea, spot a business opportunity and create a successful business.

The course is made up of two separate units:

Theme 1 – Investigating Small Business

Spotting a business opportunity, enterprise and entrepreneurship, putting a business idea into practice, making business effective, external influences on business.

Theme 2 – Building a Business

Growing the business, making marketing decisions, making operational decisions, making financial decisions and making human resource decisions.

Is this subject right for me?

If you enjoy communicating and explaining your ideas, thinking creatively and making decisions, working with numbers to solve business problems and learning about the world of business through research and investigation, then this could be an ideal subject choice for you.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in Business Studies	Edexcel

Assessment

Theme 1	Exam including multiple choice questions and short/long answers	1hr 45mins 50%
Theme 2	External written examination	1hr 45 mins 50%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Business Studies subject video

[Year 9 options: Business Studies](#)



Creative iMedia (Cambridge National Award)

Course content

There are two core units and one specialist unit:

- Digital Media Industry and Pre-production skills
- Creating digital graphics
- Creating an interactive digital media product

Media plays an important part in many areas of our everyday lives and is also an important part of the UK economy. There is a demand from employers for an increasingly skilled and technically literate workforce as more and more media products are produced digitally. Cambridge Nationals in Creative iMedia provide you with specific and transferable skills and a solid foundation in understanding and applying this subject, whether it is in employment or higher education.

Planning is an essential part of working in the creative and digital media sector. This unit will enable you to understand **pre-production skills** and techniques, as well as gain the knowledge and skills to create digital media products and explore their application.

Digital graphics feature in many areas of our lives and play a very important part in today's world. The digital media sector relies heavily on these visual stimulants within products to communicate messages effectively.

Multimedia Products are the basis of internet content and are therefore used extensively in the creative digital media sector.



QUALIFICATION

Equivalent to a GCSE

EXAM BOARD

OCR

Assessment

Points are awarded for each element to produce the final grade which will be a Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction* at level 1 or level 2.

Written exam	1hr 30mins 40%
Coursework (teacher assessed) 2 x board set tasks worth 25% and 35%	60%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Creative iMedia subject video

[Year 9 options: Creative iMedia](#)

GCSE Computer Science

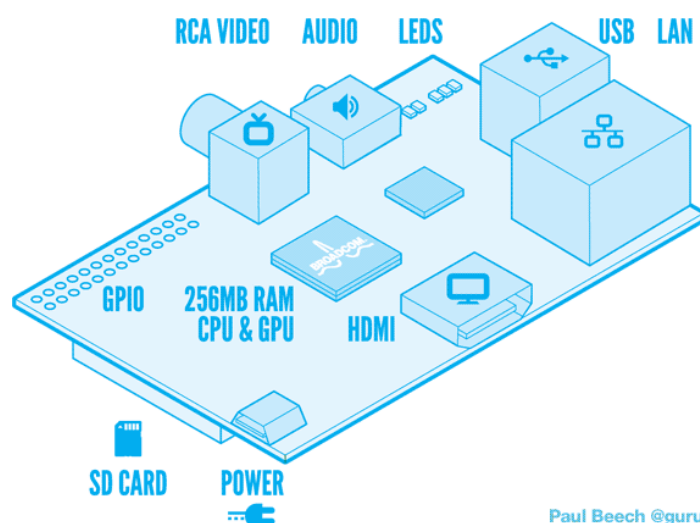
Course content

This is a course that has real relevance in our modern world. While students will no doubt already have some knowledge of computers, this course will give them an in-depth understanding of how computer technology works and a look at what goes on "behind the scenes". The course will also develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the study of computer programming.

Students who have taken a GCSE Computer Science and who then progress to study the subject at A Level or University will have an advantage over their colleagues who are picking up the subject at these levels.

Studying Computing is excellent preparation for students who want to study or work in areas that rely on analytical thinking skills, especially where they are applied to technical problems, for example in Engineering, Financial and Resource Management, Science and Medicine.

Computer Science GCSE is now included as a science option in the English Baccalaureate performance measure. It cannot replace a science in our curriculum model, but the grade could replace a lower science grade in order to ensure a student achieves the EBacc measure.



Paul Beech @guru

QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE Computer Science	OCR

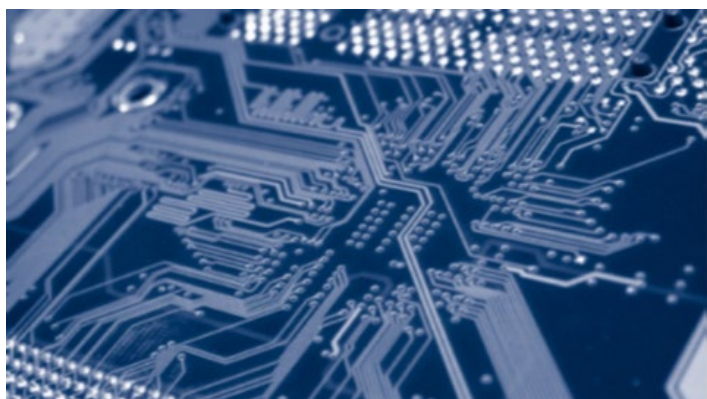
Assessment

Paper 1	Written examination on Computer Systems	1hr 30mins 50%
Paper 2	Written examination on Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming	1hr 30 mins 50%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Computer Science subject video

[Year 9 options: Computer Science](#)



GCSE Design and Technology

Course content

Design and Technology is now a single subject which provides opportunities to design, model, make and evaluate quality products manufactured from a wide range of materials.

Students will learn core knowledge of design technology and an in-depth knowledge of specific materials. Students will build on their knowledge and skills covered in Key Stage 3. They will learn to recognise design opportunities and how to explore specific areas to enable them to plan and design innovative modern products. They will be studying the work of existing designers through the analysis and handling of modern products.

Students communication skills will be consolidated and developed through the use of recognised techniques including iterative design sketch, production of orthographic drawing and utilisation of CAD systems to enhance presentations. Our modern CAM equipment will be employed along with traditional techniques to manufacture quality working prototypes.

Access to the required equipment should not prevent any student opting for Design Technology, as there are limited funds available to support families experiencing financial difficulty.

Students are encouraged to enter competitions to enable them to develop their designing and communication skills. In recent years we have had notable success in national competitions.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE Design and Technology	AQA

Assessment

Written exam	Investigating core and specific technical knowledge	2hrs 50%
Coursework	Practical coursework (non-exam assessment) a contextual challenge set by the exam board in Year 11	50%



SUBJECT VIDEO

Click below to watch the Design and Technology subject video

[Year 9 options: Design and Technology](#)

GCSE Drama

Course content

The OCR Drama GCSE is an excellent choice for students because of the personalised pathways of both performance and design (set, costume, lighting, and sound). As 60% of the overall grade comes from practical exploration, it allows students to develop their confidence, communication and key 21st century skills.

As part of the course, students will attend the theatre, experience a range of play texts and consider challenging themes and issues. The course is highly engaging and enjoyable allowing students to produce high quality contemporary performance.

The course consists of three components:

Component 1: Devising Drama

Students work from a stimulus to research themes and issues from which to create a performance. Students can work as a performer or designer.

Practical work is supported by a portfolio documenting the creative process.

Component 2: Presenting and Performing Texts

Students will study a play text chosen by the school. Students can work as a performer or designer.

Students will take part in performing two extracts from the play or supporting a group with the design and creation.

There is a short supporting document outlining the performers vision for the piece.

Component 3: Performance and Response

Section A – a study of one play text set by the exam board

Section B – completing of a live theatre evaluation (seen by the student as part of their study)



QUALIFICATION

GCSE Drama

EXAM BOARD

OCR

Assessment

Component 1	Devising Drama	60 marks 30%
Component 2	Presenting and Performing Texts	60 marks 30%
Component 3	Performance and Response Written Examination	1hr 30mins 80 marks 40%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Drama subject video

[Year 9 options: Drama](#)

Research from The Cultural Learning Alliance found that;

- Taking part in arts activities (such as Drama) can increase cognitive ability by 17%.
- Students who take part in arts activities are three times more likely to get a degree.
- Learning through arts and culture can help children achieve more highly in Maths and English.

Food and Nutrition or Hospitality and Catering

Course content

The Food Preparation and Nutrition/Hospitality and Catering courses are designed for all students who enjoy making a wide variety of food products. Students must be committed to cooking every week, where possible, to fully develop their practical skills and confidence.

On both courses, students will learn about nutrition, food safety and a variety of food preparation and cooking skills.

The school has developed strong links with food businesses who aim to support learning in various ways. In Year 10, students also have the opportunity to enter local and national cooking competitions such as Springboard Futurechef and Rotary Young Chef. The food courses equip students with valuable life skills, enabling them to choose food wisely and competently prepare a wide range of products for different groups of people and occasions. Students can later choose to study Food to a higher level if they are interested in potential careers in the exciting and ever developing food industry and health care professions.

Access to the required ingredients and equipment should not prevent any student opting for Food Preparation and Nutrition, as there are limited funds available to support families experiencing financial difficulty.

Which course will I do?

Teachers will recommend the course which best suits your needs based on your progress so far and your learner style.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in Food and Nutrition	AQA
OR	
Level 2 Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering	Eduqas

Assessment

GCSE Food and Nutrition		
Exam	Written Exam	1hr 45mins 50%
Coursework	Two tasks set by the exam board - Food Investigation Task 15% - Food Preparation Task 35% including 3-hour practical assessment	50%

Level 2 Hospitality and Catering		
Exam	Written Exam	1hr 20mins 40%
Coursework	Task set by the exam board including 3-hour practical assessment. You will plan and prepare a menu in response to a brief set by the exam board.	60%

Subject video

Click below to watch the subject videos

[Year 9 options: Food and Nutrition](#)

[Year 9 options: Hospitality and Catering](#)

GCSE Geography

Course content

The Geography course is split into 3 sections:

Physical Geography

- The Challenge of Natural Hazards
- Physical Landscapes in the UK
- The Living world

Human Geography

- Urban Issues and Challenges
- The Changing Economic World
- The Challenge of Resource Management

Fieldwork

- Students take part in two fieldwork days. These take place in Malham and Leeds
- This fieldwork contributes towards the Paper 3 exam.

The course is a great basis for moving on to A Level Geography. Universities and employers prize the knowledge and skills that studying geography can provide.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in Geography	AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	Living with the Physical Environment	1hr 30mins 35%
Paper 2	Challenges in the Human Environment	1hr 30mins 35%
Paper 3	Fieldwork, Issue Evaluation and Geographical Skills	1hr 30mins 30%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Geography subject video

[Year 9 options: Geography](#)

GCSE History

Course content

Paper 1: Understanding the modern world

Section A - period study

Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and dictatorship

This study focuses on the development of Germany during a period of democracy and dictatorship – the development and collapse of democracy and the rise and fall of Nazism.

Section B - wider world depth study

Conflict and tension, 1918–1939

This study enables students to understand the complex and diverse interests of different individuals and countries. It focuses on the causes of the Second World War and seeks to show how and why conflict occurred and why it proved difficult to resolve the issues which caused it.

Paper 2: Shaping the nation

Section A - thematic study

Britain: Health and the people: c1000 to the present day

This study will enable students to gain an understanding of how medicine and public health developed in Britain over a long period of time.

Section B - British depth studies including the historic environment

Study of a Medieval Period

Students will study and develop contextual knowledge of a specific Medieval period in Britain.



QUALIFICATION

GCSE in History

EXAM BOARD

AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	Understanding the modern world	2 hrs 50%
Paper 2	Shaping the nation	2 hrs 50%

Subject video

Click below to watch the History subject video

[Year 9 options: History](#)

GCSE French, German or Spanish

Course content

Students develop their communication and comprehension skills logically from Key Stage 3, becoming more confident and proficient users of the language. Learning is underpinned by a focus on the pillars of vocabulary acquisition, grammar and phonics. These skills are taught in conjunction with the following themes on which the assessments are based:

- Theme 1: People and lifestyle
- Theme 2: Popular culture
- Theme 3: Communication and the world around us

Students are entered at either Foundation or Higher tier for all papers, depending on their ability profile in Year 11. All prior data will be considered at this point.



Examination papers

Paper 1: Listening – understanding and responding to different types of spoken language.

Paper 2: Speaking – communicating and interacting effectively in speech.

Paper 3: Reading – understanding and responding to different types of written language.

Paper 4: Writing – communicating effectively in writing for a variety of purposes.

QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in French, German or Spanish	AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	Listening	35 mins – Foundation 45 mins – Higher 25%
Paper 2	Speaking	7-9 mins – Foundation 10-12 mins – Higher 25%
Paper 3	Reading	45 mins – Foundation 1hr – Higher 25%
Paper 4	Writing	1hr 10mins – Foundation 1hr 15mins – Higher 25%

Subject video

Click below to watch the MFL subject video

[Year 9 options: MFL](#)



GCSE Music

Course content

This course is a great choice for anyone with a passion for music. Many varied styles of music will be explored throughout the course ranging from Classical, Rock, Pop, Musical Theatre everything in between. This course, with its large practical element, helps enable students to develop skills as performers and composers as well as their understanding of how musical elements run through all genres and styles.

There are three components to the course:

Performance (combined duration - minimum of 4 minutes)

- Students play one solo piece (instrument/vocal)
- Students perform one piece as part of an ensemble e.g. a band, duet

Composition (combined duration of a minimum of 3 minutes)

- Students are required to compose one composition of their choice
- Students will be required to compose a piece in response to a brief set by the exam board

Listening

Students will listen to and understand a wide variety of styles and musical traditions. There are four Areas of Study with two set works. This is assessed in a 1hr30min exam at the end of the course.

The course provides a good foundation for studying both A Level Music and BTEC Music.



QUALIFICATION

GCSE in Music

EXAM BOARD

AQA

Assessment

Component 1	Performance Internally marked and externally moderated	30%
Component 2	Composition Internally marked and externally moderated	30%
Component 3	Listening	40%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Music subject video

[Year 9 options: Music](#)



Physical Education – GCSE or BTEC

Course content

These courses are designed for all students who enjoy participating in and learning about sport. Students must be committed to participating in sport outside of school, on a regular basis, to fully develop their practical skills and knowledge.

On both the GCSE and BTEC course, students will learn about testing and developing fitness, and the factors that affect involvement in sport. GCSE Physical Education also covers more science-based topics, such as biomechanics, anatomy and physiology, sport psychology and socio-cultural factors. The focus of BTEC Sport is on preparing for sport and improving performance through developing your own and other's skills and fitness.

GCSE Physical Education

This course involves the assessment of students' practical performances in three sports. It is therefore essential that students opting for this subject are already performing at a high level in at least two sports, either inside or outside of school. Two out of six lessons will be practical which will focus on developing their performance in Table Tennis or Badminton to assist with their third sporting option. Theory knowledge will be tested in their GCSE PE examinations in the summer of Year 11.

Level 2 BTEC Technical Award in Sport

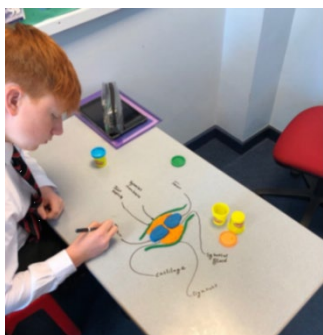
In this course, students are assessed on their participation and knowledge of sport and performance across three components:

- Component 1: Preparing and taking part in physical activity
- Component 2: Taking part and improving other participants sporting performance in sport and physical activity
- Component 3: Developing fitness to improve other participants performance in sport and physical activity

The course develops coaching and leadership skills and is a good precursor to Level 3 Extended Certificate which is offered in Sixth Form.

Which course will I do?

Teachers will recommend the course which best suits your needs based on your progress so far and your sporting skills.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in PE OR Level 2 BTEC Tech Award in Sport	AQA Edexcel

Assessment

GCSE Physical Education		
Paper 1	Examination The Human Body and Movement	1hr 15 mins 30%
Paper 2	Examination Socio-cultural Influences	1hr 15mins 30%
Practical	Assessed on three sports	30%
Coursework	Written course work	10%

BTEC Sport		
Component 1	Task set by the exam board, assessed internally	30%
Component 2	Task set by the exam board, assessed internally	30%
Component 3	External examination	1hr 30 mins 40%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Physical Education and Sport subject videos

[Year 9 options: GCSE Physical Education](#)

[Year 9 options: BTEC Sport](#)

GCSE Sociology

COURSE CONTENT

Paper 1: The Sociology of Families and Education

Families:

Students study different forms of families in the UK and explore the nature of relationships within families and how they have changed over time. Different sociological perspectives on the role of the family in society are analysed and evaluated.

Education:

Students assess the role of education within society from a range of sociological perspectives. Factors affecting differences in educational achievement are studied, with a focus on the influence of social class, gender and ethnicity.

Paper 2: The Sociology of Crime and Deviance and Social Stratification

Crime and Deviance:

Students will gain an understanding of the different sociological explanations of crime and deviance, and the ways in which crime may be controlled. Differences in rates of offending between men and women, different social classes and ethnic groups are analysed and explained.

Social Stratification:

Students study social inequalities in the UK, including differences in material wealth, social class, power and status. Factors affecting differences in individuals' life chances are explored, with a focus on differences in social class, gender, ethnicity, disability and age.



QUALIFICATION

GCSE in Sociology

EXAM BOARD

AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	External written examination	1hr 45mins 50%
Paper 2	External written examination	1hr 45 mins 50%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Sociology subject video

[Year 9 options: Sociology](#)

Core Subjects



GCSE English Language

Course content

The course develops and assesses skills in Spoken Language, Reading and Writing.

A wide variety of texts are studied for exam preparation, including novels, plays, poems, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, films and television programmes.

Paper 1: Exploration in Creative Reading and Writing

This exam includes several comprehension questions about one unseen literature fiction text and one extended descriptive writing question.

Paper 2: Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

This exam includes several comprehension questions about two linked non-fiction texts and one extended writing question presenting a viewpoint.

Spoken Language Element

This appears as a separate endorsement on the GCSE certificate (0% weighting). Tasks are set and marked by the teacher throughout the course. These include presenting, responding to questions and feedback, and use of Standard English.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in English Language	AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	Examination Explorations in creative reading and writing	1hr 45mins 50%
Paper 2	Examination Writers' viewpoints and perspectives	1hr 45 mins 50%
Spoken Language	Reported as a separate element	0%



Subject video

Click below to watch the English subject video

[Core subject: English](#)

GCSE English Literature

Course content

The course develops and assesses skills in the close reading and analysis of novels, poems and plays. It also challenges students to be able to communicate their understanding effectively through essay writing.

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th century novel

This exam includes a question on a Shakespeare play and a question on a 19th century novel.

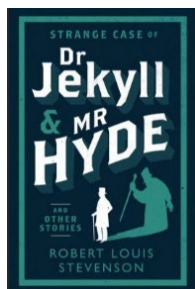
Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry

This exam includes a question on either the modern prose text or drama text studied and a comparative question on two poems you will have studied within a cluster of poems and a question on a poem you will not have seen before.

The texts that will be studied in Years 10 and 11 are:



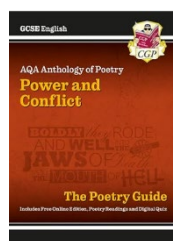
Animal Farm by George Orwell



The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson



Macbeth by William Shakespeare



Power and Conflict Poetry Anthology



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in English Literature	AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	Examination Shakespeare and the 19 th century novel	1hr 45mins 40%
Paper 2	Examination Modern Texts and Poetry	2hr 15 mins 60%

Subject video

Click below to watch the English subject video

[Core Subject: English](#)

GCSE Maths

Course content

The course is divided into the following subjects:

- Number
- Algebra
- Ratio, proportion and rates of change
- Geometry and measures
- Probability
- Statistics

Mathematics is an exciting and challenging subject. It enables us to solve everyday problems and has many applications across other subject areas.

All students must have a scientific calculator for the course. We recommend the Casio fx-83GTCW, or if you plan to study GCSE Further Maths or a Maths course in Sixth Form, we recommend the Casio fx-991CW. iPads are also used for other tasks such as graph drawing and spreadsheet processing.

There is an increased mathematical difficulty in both foundation and higher tier syllabuses. At foundation tier there is substantially more content which has made its way down from the higher tier. In both tiers there is greater rigour as the three final exams now last a total of 4.5 hours.

Students are entered at either foundation or higher tier, depending on their ability. This is generally decided following the mock examinations. All prior data will be considered at this point.

The exams are designed to assess the ability to use and apply standard mathematical techniques, as well as to reason, interpret and communicate mathematically.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in Maths	Edexcel

Assessment

Paper 1	Non-calculator	1hr 30mins 80 marks
Paper 2	Calculator	1hr 30mins 80 marks
Paper 3	Calculator	1hr 30mins 80 marks

Subject video

Click below to watch the Maths subject video

[Core subject: Maths – to follow](#)

GCSE Science Triple

Course content

Covers scientific ideas, how they develop and how they apply to a range of domestic, industrial and environmental contexts. Students will cover a range of topics and experience a range of practical work, problem solving and ICT to help them learn new ideas.

Topics covered include:

- Working Scientifically
- The Eye and Brain
- Bioenergetics
- Atomic Structure and the Periodic Table
- Mole Calculations
- Structure and Bonding
- Energy
- Space Physics
- Cell Biology
- Infection and Response
- Inheritance
- Forces
- Electricity
- Energy Changes
- Waves
- Chemical Analysis

Recommendations will be made for students to take the separate science GCSEs. Attainment in Year 9 and attitude to learning will be considered when assessing the suitability of students to follow the triple science pathway. Students following the triple science pathway will cover more content in each subject than those who follow the combined pathway. This means that they will cover the content at a faster pace and will be expected to consolidate their understanding through extra home learning and independent revision.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
1 GCSE qualification in each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics	AQA

Assessment

Two papers on each GCSE Science subject.

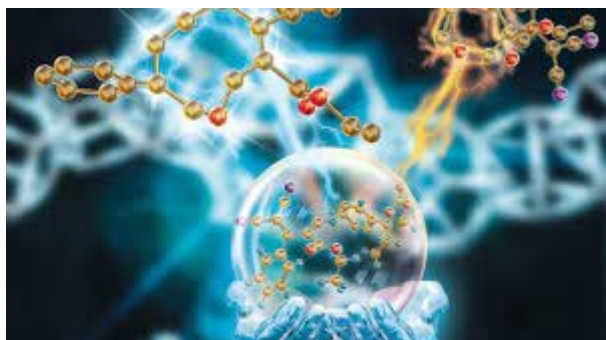
There are higher and foundation tiers for each examination.

Paper 1	Written exam	1hr 45mins 50%
Paper 2	Written exam	1hr 45mins 50%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Science subject video

[Core subject: Science](#)



GCSE Science Combined

Course content

Covers scientific ideas, how they develop and how they apply to a range of domestic, industrial and environmental contexts.

Students will cover a range of topics and experience a range of practical work, problem solving and ICT to help them learn new ideas.

Topics covered include:

- Working Scientifically
- Cell Biology
- Infection and Response
- Bioenergetics
- Inheritance
- Atomic Structure and the Periodic Table
- Electricity
- Energy Changes
- Chemical Analysis
- Forces
- Energy
- Waves
- Structure and Bonding



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
Combined Science (equal to 2 GCSEs)	AQA

There is a double grade ranging from 9-9 to 1-1 and this can include split grades e.g. 7-6.

There is a higher and foundation tier for each examination.

Throughout the course students will complete 21 required practicals and they will be assessed on their understanding of these in all examinations.

Following the Combined Science pathway will allow entry onto A Level Biology, Physics and Chemistry courses in the Sixth Form. This is subject to meeting the entry requirements for these subjects.

Assessment

Six papers in total, two on each Science discipline.

There are higher and foundation tiers for each examination.

Paper 1 to 6	Written exams	1hr 15mins
		16.7% each paper



Subject video

Click below to watch the Science subject video

[Core subject: Science](#)

GCSE Religious Studies

Course content

All students at Harrogate Grammar School sit the full GCSE course in Religious Studies. Students have already started the course at the beginning of Year 9. This does not take up one of their option choices.

The course is divided into two sections, each separately examined.

Paper 1: The Study of Religions

This section of the course requires students to gain a deep understanding of two different major world religions: Christianity and Islam. These religions have been selected as the largest and fastest growing religions in the UK. The course covers the beliefs and practices of these major religions, as well as a critical evaluation of these ideas. Unlike many other GCSEs, 50% of the marks available are for the explanation of a student's own beliefs.

Paper 2: Religious Philosophy and Ethical Questions

This section of the course requires students to answer challenging questions on a variety of topics by comparing their own viewpoints and ideas with those from a religious perspective. Students will study four areas:

- Religion and Life
- Religion, peace and conflict
- Religion, crime and punishment
- Relationships and families

These topics are considered from both a secular humanist and a religious perspective. The course does not seek to challenge or assert any given faith tradition but encourages students to explore their own.

The examinations will consist of short answer questions and longer essay based questions. There is no coursework.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
GCSE in Religious Studies	AQA

Assessment

Paper 1	Written exam	1hr 45 mins 50%
Paper 2	Written exam	1hr 45 mins 50%

Subject video

Click below to watch the Religious Studies subject video

[Core subject: Religious Studies](#)

Physical Education (Core)

Course content

Students will complete two compulsory PE lessons each week where a programme is followed in accordance with the National Curriculum Key Stage 4 framework.

Throughout KS4 students have the opportunity to experience a wide range of activities, both at an introductory and in-depth level.

Students are often given the opportunity to choose activities that reflect individual interests within PE. However, this will always be dependent on the group and facilities available. This is to encourage and promote healthy lifestyles, enjoyment and lifelong participation.

Activities can include:

Aerobics, badminton, basketball, cricket, dance, football, frisbee, gymnastics, health-related fitness, hockey, lacrosse, netball, rugby, rounders, softball, tennis, rugby, table tennis and volleyball.



QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
n/a	n/a

Assessment

This course is not examined

Extra-curricular

Students are encouraged to follow their interests by taking part in the many after school clubs on offer.

There is also the opportunity to participate in the various fixtures and tournaments arranged.



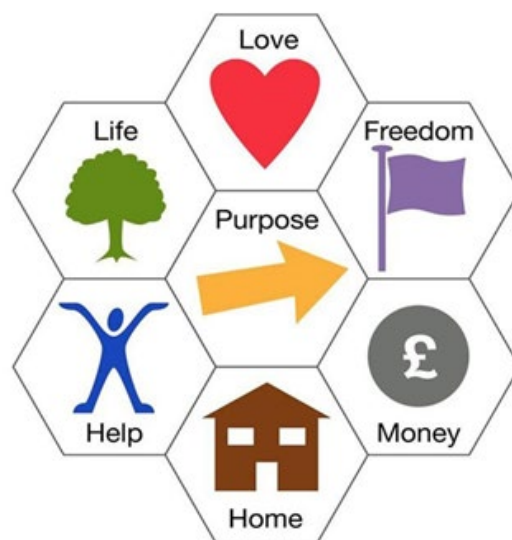
Big Picture Personal Development Programme

Course content

Students in Years 10 and 11 follow a Personal Development programme called 'The Big Picture' which incorporates elements of Personal, Social & Health Education, Citizenship, Careers Education and Guidance.

This is delivered by Form Tutors through Guidance lessons supported by assemblies and Big Picture Days.

Through a range of exciting activities in lessons, visiting speakers, workshops and themed days they are encouraged to develop the skills and understanding that are required to lead a confident, healthy and independent life. Students are empowered to develop mutual respect and the confidence to take control of their present and future. This is nurtured through a proactive, specialised and caring environment which promotes consistency, stability and respect for all.



Concepts discussed

Identity (their personal qualities, attitudes, skills, attributes and achievements and what influences these).

Relationships (including different types and in different settings)

A healthy (including physically, emotionally and socially), **balanced lifestyle** (including within relationships, work-life, exercise and rest, spending and saving and diet).

Risk (identification, assessment and how to manage risk rather than simply the avoidance of risk for self and others) and **safety** (including behaviour and strategies to employ in different settings).

Diversity and equality (in all its forms)

Rights (including the notion of universal human rights), **responsibilities** (including fairness and justice) and **consent** (in different contexts).

Change (as something to be managed) and **resilience** (the skills, strategies and 'inner resources' we can draw on when faced with challenging change or circumstance).

Power (how it is used and encountered in a variety of contexts including persuasion, bullying, negotiation and 'win win' outcomes).

Career (including enterprise, employability and economic understanding).

QUALIFICATION	EXAM BOARD
n/a	n/a

Assessment

This course is not examined

Next steps

To make your GCSE choices, please complete the Year 9 Options Form, a link to which will be included in your recommendations email, **by Monday 26 January 2026**.

The form will open on Monday 12 January 2026.

Before completing this form, you will need to:

- Talk to your parents/carers about the subjects you would like to choose.
- Have the recommendation email to hand – this will be emailed to you and your parents on Monday 12 January.

Year 9 Options 2026

Please have your recommendations email to hand when completing this form (emailed to students on Monday 12 January 2026).

Please complete the **whole form** as this will guide you through your four options.

There is no requirement to select:

- Science option of Combined or Triple - details of the recommendation of course is contained within the recommendations email that students received on Monday 12 January.
- English Literature, English Language, Maths and Religious Studies as these are all core subjects

Please complete this form by **Monday 26 January 2026**.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

Please have your recommendations email to hand when completing this form (emailed to students and parents on Wednesday 17 December 2025).

1. Student first name *

Enter your answer

2. Student surname *

Enter your answer



What happens next?

Once the deadline for submission of the options form has passed, we will look at what subjects' Year 9 students have chosen.

You will then receive confirmation of the GCSE choices allocated to you after the Easter break.