



ST JAMES
Senior Girls' School

GCSE Options Policy

St James Senior Girls' School

Outline of Options Process - Year 9

Autumn Term

- Interviews between Head of Careers/pupil/parent(s)
- Parent/Teacher interviews - pupils attend; preliminary discussions about subject choices

Spring Term

- Meeting for parents and pupils with Headmistress/Deputy Head (Academic); GCSE matrix issued
- Recommendations made regarding number of subjects/subject choices; Options Forms published on the Parent Portal on Schoolbase
- Option Forms completed and submitted
- Further consultation with Deputy Head (Academic) where necessary

Summer Term

- Pass marks issued for end of year exams
- Pupils retake exams where they have not reached the qualifying standard
- Final choice of subjects confirmed

During the Autumn Term, the Head of Careers meets with each Year 9 pupil individually; many parents also choose to attend. Any vocational interest which becomes clear as a result of this meeting is used as a basis for the choice of GCSE subjects. Where a pupil is unclear as to her future direction, the advice is to keep as broad a balance of subjects as possible.

At the beginning of the Spring Term, the Headmistress, Deputy Head (Academic) and Head of Middle School hold a meeting for parents and pupils in Year 9 to inform them about the GCSE Options process. At this meeting, parents and pupils are given copies of the GCSE syllabuses and the GCSE matrix and are guided through the online Options Form. Most pupils are recommended to choose nine GCSE subjects to study - the maximum number is usually ten for the most able and the minimum is eight (or, rarely, fewer).

The following subjects are compulsory: English Language, English Literature and Mathematics. Each pupil must choose one science and one language (exceptions to this requirement are only made rarely and only after discussion with the Deputy Head Academic). Pupils then choose their remaining subjects from those available.

The Head of Middle School and the Deputy Head (Academic) gather feedback from Heads of Department in order to decide upon the following:

- the recommended number of GCSE subjects for each pupil
- any subjects which are not recommended for particular pupils, given their current level of attainment

This information is then sent to parents.

The examinations in the Summer Term of Year 9 act as qualifying examinations for entry to the GCSE courses. Each department will set a pass mark for their subject and the pupils who want to continue with the subject will be required to re-sit the examination before the end of the Summer Term if they do not pass first time. If a pupil does not reach the standard required, she will not be allowed to continue to GCSE and must choose another subject to study instead.

Signed by:	Hugh Venables Chair of Governors
Date of adoption of this policy	January 2022
Date of last review of this policy	Autumn 2021
Date for next review of this policy	Autumn 2022
Policy owner (SMT)	Deputy Head (Academic)