

## An Overview of the Year 9 Options Procedure: 2024

For GCSE courses starting in August 2024, course information **and** the actual option selection process will be available online.

### Timeline

Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> December	Course information will become available on the Dubai College website in the following area: <a href="https://www.dubaicollege.org/academic/middle-school">https://www.dubaicollege.org/academic/middle-school</a>
Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> January	Year 9 Options Evening
Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> January	Option choices go 'live'. Further information about this process will be made available in due course.
<b>Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February</b>	<b>GCSE Option choices deadline: 10.00am</b>

### The Options Evening

All students and parents will be able to visit the subjects in which options are available to students. Heads of Department will give a brief overview of the course and answer any subject specific questions. Senior staff will also be available to provide more general guidance about options. Further information about this will follow soon.

### Key Information

The option blocks for GCSE subjects are given as detailed on the next page.

- Students choose their **4** preferred subjects online by **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February**, subject to one option being chosen in each block

Students and parents need to be aware of the following:

- **We reserve the right not to offer a course if there is insufficient demand for it.** If this does occur, students will be told as soon as possible after the options deadline and offered appropriate advice
- Students who miss the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> February may not receive their preferred choices
- Students *may* change their minds about option choices after the deadline; however, they will only be allowed to change *if* their new choice fits in with the option blocks **and** there is sufficient space available in subject sets. If there is insufficient space, then the student will be added to a waiting list for that subject. Any changes in options must be completed by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

## **GCSE Choices: An Overview**

**All** students will take the following compulsory timetabled subjects in Year 10 and Year 11:

Mathematics  
English Language  
English Literature  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Physics  
Arabic (or Arabic A for students who hold an Arabic passport)  
UAE Social Studies  
Games  
Islamic Studies (for Muslim Students only)

### **The Higher Project Qualification (HPQ)**

If students choose this course, they will start their study in term 2 of Year 10. The course finishes at the end of term 1 in Year 11. The qualification is worth half a GCSE. **If students wish to study for the HPQ, they must select Directed Study/HPQ in option 4.** If students wish to study French or Spanish in option 4, they will not be able to take the HPQ.

The course starts with an introduction to Philosophy and Critical Thinking and teaches students the research skills necessary to enable them to engage in research on their self-selected topic. They then participate in a thesis writing course culminating in the production of a 3000-4000 word independently produced project, submitted at the end of term 1 in Year 11. From the outset students keep an academic journal, known as a log, documenting and evaluating their experience as they go along. This also carries marks as do time management and organisation. Just before final submission students deliver a presentation to their peers, which includes a question and answer session, sharing their project experience and findings.

Strict criteria are enforced to ensure that the student genuinely wishes to pursue a project of this nature which is challenging and demanding. It is also to ensure that they are not taking on something which may negatively impact their studies elsewhere in the curriculum.

Once accepted on to the programme, students are in control of their project and its progression. Unlike other subjects, the student will need to be self-motivated throughout and is free to withdraw at any time. The programme is exciting in that students can explore a topic in depth which they are passionate about and which does not feature in their current studies, whilst experiencing a little of how a university course might be run.

### **A Modern Foreign Language during Directed Study periods**

Please note that this is **not** a straightforward option.

Students who would like to study French or Spanish for GCSE and who cannot fit the language of their choice in Option 3 will have the opportunity to study French or Spanish as a 4<sup>th</sup> option. **This will take place instead of two of their Directed Study periods and will mean that they will not be able to take the HPQ.**

Students will be required to put aside at least one hour of independent study per week using online platforms that encourage collaboration and sharing of resources alongside teacher support when needed. This model, whilst being demanding, will ensure that students have access to all four of the key language skills. This opportunity builds on the Year 9 course where students will already have studied for 25% of the required modules of the GCSE course. It will enable them to choose French or Spanish in the Sixth Form if they wish to do so.

## Available Option Choices

Students must choose one subject from each option:

	Choose <b>one</b> from:	Notes
<b>Option 1</b>	Art Design and Technology Drama Latin Music PE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latin is only available to students who studied the subject in Year 9</li> <li>• 3 periods/week</li> </ul>
<b>Option 2</b>	Computer Science Economics Geography History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 periods/week</li> </ul>
<b>Option 3</b>	Art Computer Science Design and Technology Drama Economics French Geography History Latin Music Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latin is only available to students who studied the subject in Year 9</li> <li>• 3 periods/week</li> </ul>
<b>Option 4</b>	Directed Study/HPQ French Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The default option here is for students to take Directed Study; this is where students undertake further study into their other GCSE subjects.</li> <li>• <i>If</i> the Directed Study option is chosen, students <b>may</b> elect to take the Higher Project Qualification (starting in term 2) for 1 period/week instead of one of their DS lessons.</li> <li>• Instead, students may opt to study for GCSE French or Spanish in this column instead of Directed Study for <b>2 periods/week only</b>.</li> <li>• Therefore, <i>if</i> students opt for French or Spanish as option 4, they will <b>not</b> be able to take the HPQ.</li> </ul>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Do I need to take a language at GCSE?

No. Under the options structure on page 3, there is no compulsion to take any optional language to GCSE Level.

### 2. Do I have to take GCSE Arabic?

Under KHDA regulations, students have to study Arabic to the end of Year 10. Our view is that it is important to have a language as part of a 'broad and balanced' curriculum. Therefore all students will continue to study Arabic until the end of Year 11.

In Year 11, students will be able to either:

- Study Arabic to GCSE. This is our recommended option; students will only have a further two terms of study in Year 11 before taking a GCSE in Arabic in the summer examination session; they should weigh up this extra two terms of study in the subject against the time and effort that they have put into the subject to date when deciding whether to continue with Arabic to GCSE in Year 11.
- Study Arabic for an ACTFL certification. This certification may be taken in one or more of the skill areas of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
- Study Arabic as an enrichment subject only.

### 3. How useful is GCSE Arabic likely to be?

Arabic is likely to be a key differentiator of Dubai-based students from other students globally and, increasingly, Arabic speakers will be prioritised for certain job roles within the MENA region. Arabic is also the second most important language for the UK's future, according to the Languages for the Future report produced by the British Council.

### 4. Will I need a foreign language qualification as an entry requirement for university?

This is only important in a small number of cases.

At University College, London, entry requirements include having a GCSE in a foreign language (this, of course, includes Arabic).

Canadian universities generally require French, and many Irish universities require a foreign language. Of course, entry requirements frequently change and you do need to do your own research for universities both inside and outside of the UK.

### 5. Will doing 9 GCSEs rather than 10 'ruin my chances' of going to a top university?

In a nutshell, 'no'. We have consulted with several UK Russell Group universities (including LSE, UCL, Imperial, Bristol, Exeter, Oxford and Cambridge). They all state that there is **no requirement to take 10 GCSEs**. Only medicine degrees state the actual number of GCSEs required – these look at applicants' best 8 (or, in one case, 6) GCSEs.

Both Oxford and Cambridge state that each application is looked at individually: there are no set number of GCSEs that need to be taken and that quality matters more than quantity.