



HARROW
SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ELECTIVES

2026-27



SIXTH FORM ELECTIVES

Electives are an opportunity to explore subjects and ideas beyond the limits of the A-level curriculum. They are designed to complement, extend or contrast with your examined subjects, encouraging independent learning, intellectual curiosity, lateral thinking and problem-solving. Free from the constraints of public examinations, they allow you to pursue existing interests, discover entirely new disciplines and develop the habits of mind that will serve you well at university and beyond.

Electives form an integral part of the Harrow Diploma. Most boys take six courses, choosing at least one from each of the five subject groups: Individuals and Societies; Maths, Science and Technology; Language, Literature and the Arts; Life Skills and Wellbeing; and Interdisciplinary Courses. Together, these groups are intended to encourage breadth as well as depth, ensuring that boys explore ideas beyond the boundaries of their A-level subjects.

The programme brings together expertise from across the School, offering more than 25 courses each year. These range from emerging technologies and practical life skills to literature, philosophy, music, history and the sciences.

Most Electives are short courses consisting of ten lessons, although a small number are longer courses comprising 30 lessons over three Elective cycles.

You will register your preferences during the first week of the autumn term of your Lower Sixth year, and lessons will begin before the first exam.

This booklet contains brief descriptions of all the Electives being offered in 2026/27.

A D Todd
Director of the Super-Curriculum

GROUP A: INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

THE BATTLE FOR THE ARCTIC

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

For centuries the Arctic was a frozen wilderness at the edge of the known world. Today it is one of the most important regions on Earth. Indigenous communities fight for survival while nations struggle for influence. Explore the history and geography of the Arctic, the consequences of competing claims, conflicting interests and unanswered questions. Through the eyes of explorers, scientists, governments and indigenous peoples, you will tackle one of the defining questions of the 21st century: who should control the Arctic and what should its future look like?

THE ANCIENT WORLD IN MODERN CULTURE

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

‘But apart from sanitation, medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the fresh-water system and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?’ Teachers use this quote from *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* to “prove” the significance of Roman civilisation.

(The Greeks, except inventing democracy, drama, philosophy and history as we know them, did not do much for us either.) Classical references, when you have learned to see them, appear across contemporary art, film, literature, architecture and politics. This course will equip you with the skills to discover the Classical world’s significance and interrogate its place in the modern imagination.

SHIA ISLAM: POWER, POLITICS AND IDENTITY

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course explores the origins and development of Shia Islam from the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE to the present day. Through the study of historical events, primary sources and political movements, you will investigate how questions of leadership, legitimacy, justice and religious authority shaped one of the Middle East’s most influential religious traditions. Topics include the succession to Muhammad, the emergence of distinct Sunni and Shia traditions, the rise and fall of major Islamic dynasties, and the evolution of Shia identity from the medieval period to the modern Middle East. The course is particularly relevant to those interested in history, theology, politics, international relations and Middle Eastern studies. No prior knowledge is required.

WITCHES, WITCHCRAFT AND WITCH HUNTS

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

Between 1450 and 1750, more than 100,000 people, three-quarters of them women, were prosecuted in different parts of Europe for acts including murder, cannibalism, black magic and devil worship. Some 50,000 were executed, usually by being burnt at the stake. Why did these trials take place? Why did they suddenly proliferate at this particular time in European history? Why were more witches prosecuted in some countries than others? Who were the accused and who were their accusers, and why, after more than 200 years, did the trials eventually come to an end? These are some of the key questions that this course will address.

TERRORISM AND INSURGENCY

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course is an introduction to the evolution, theory and practice of terrorism and insurgency. We will explore the historical development of terrorism, its causes and objectives, and the ways in which governments and societies have responded to it. You will examine the similarities and differences between terrorism and insurgency, considering a range of historical and contemporary case studies from around the world. The course will also introduce key ideas in classical revolutionary theory and investigate how political violence has been used by groups seeking to achieve ideological, religious or nationalist goals.



GROUP B: MATHS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

HUMAN EVOLUTION: SEVEN MILLION YEARS OF CHANGE

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course explores how humans have evolved since our divergence from chimpanzees, focusing on key developments such as consciousness, language, tool use and culture. You will examine how these traits have shaped our identity as a species and contributed to the belief in human exceptionalism. Through discussion and analysis, we will consider what makes us unique, and whether that uniqueness has always been to our advantage. Finally, we will ask how a better understanding of our evolutionary past can help us think more clearly about our future, particularly in terms of sustainability, cooperation and the survival of our species.

NINE EXPERIMENTS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

You do not need to study science at A-level to enjoy this course. Charting a journey through the history of science, we will explore nine experiments that changed the way we view the world. From Eratosthenes measuring the circumference of the Earth with a stick, through Archimedes' bath-time ponderings to Newton's contributions to rocket science, you will discover some of the most important breakthroughs in history. We will learn about Faraday and build our own batteries, before definitely not attempting to build our own atomic bombs with Einstein and Oppenheimer. Along the way we will encounter the strange world of particle-wave duality before ending with gravitational waves. Almost every lesson includes an experiment or demonstration, so you will see the science in action as well as learn the stories behind the discoveries.

DECISION MATHEMATICS: MAKING EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT CHOICES

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

How do businesses, governments and organisations make the best decisions when faced with complex problems? This course explores the mathematical ideas behind those decisions, but you do not need to be studying A-level Maths to take part. You will investigate topics such as the travelling salesman problem, route inspection, game theory and critical path analysis, discovering how algorithms, networks

and optimisation methods are used. Through practical examples and problem-solving activities, you will see how these ideas can be applied to logistics, scheduling, transport and strategic decision-making. The course is suitable for anyone with an interest in mathematics, economics, computing or business, and focuses on logical thinking rather than advanced mathematical techniques.

RECORDING AND SOUND TECHNOLOGY

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course offers a hands-on introduction to the world of sound recording and music production. You will learn the fundamentals of acoustics and audio, explore how recording technology has developed over time, and gain practical experience working with a digital audio workstation. Key topics include the history of recording, sampling and synthesis, and the creative use of sound in modern music. The course culminates in the production of your own original track in the School's recording studio. No previous experience is needed, just an interest in how music and sound are captured, shaped and created.

ENRICHED PHYSICS

Course duration: long course (30 lessons)

This course is an exploration of physics beyond the A-level syllabus. Beginning with some essential mathematics (complex numbers and differential equations), we move on to classical particles and waves before introducing quantum theory and Schrödinger's equation. You do not need to be aiming for any specific university degree to take this course, which is designed to stretch your thinking and sharpen your problem-solving skills, but it is highly recommended for those hoping to study physical science or engineering at university. This course may only be taken by those studying both Physics and Mathematics for A-level.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Course duration: long course (30 lessons)

This course is intended primarily for those who already have some experience of Python programming. Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming many aspects of modern life, and this practical course introduces the ideas that underpin today's AI systems. You will explore concepts such as machine learning, deep learning and neural networks, while learning how to program simple AI applications and build basic machine learning models. By the end of the course you will have gained hands-on experience with a range of AI tools and environments, developing an understanding of both how these technologies work and where they can be applied.



GROUP C: LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

SOUNDSCAPES OF CINEMA: MUSIC, SOUND AND THE MOVING IMAGE

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

The relationship between music, sound, film and television is fascinating and has developed enormously since the first silent movies were released in the early 1900s. This short and non-technical course will trace developments in that process from live music at the beginning, through the Golden Age of orchestral film music and the introduction of jazz and pop styles, to more recent uses of music technology, as well as considering sound effects more generally. It will look at different techniques used, such as leitmotif, and will examine the emotional power that music and sound bring to the whole genre of film.

BLACK LITERATURE

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course explores the works of some of the greatest Black writers from across the globe. Their writing has shaped discussions around race, identity, colonialism and belonging for decades, and we will reflect on the

continuing relevance of their ideas today. Through close reading and discussion, you will examine a range of literary forms including novels, essays and political writing. Among the writers we will study are James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon and Sam Selvon. The course is suitable for anyone with an interest in literature, history, politics or culture.

MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

From Latin American dance rhythms to North American jazz, hip hop and country, the music of the Americas has shaped much of what we listen to today. This course explores the roots of these genres and how they reflect the cultures, struggles and stories of the people who created them. You will listen to a wide range of music, from samba and salsa to blues and rap, and consider how social and political change influenced the sounds we now hear around the world. No musical experience is required, just curiosity and an open ear.

TIED THROUGH TIME

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

From 17th-century cravats to modern neckties, this course is about one of the most recognisable items of men's dress. You will learn how to make your own tie, going step by step through the process and developing practical skills in pattern making, fabric work and tie construction. Alongside this, you will explore the history of this important part of the Harrow uniform, how it has evolved as a form of expression through award ties, and its wider place in the fashion industry from traditional manufacturing to the future of fashion.

SECRETS OF THE CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

Unlike ordinary crosswords, cryptic crosswords combine general knowledge with logical wordplay. Every clue contains hidden instructions that can be solved using a recognised set of techniques. In this course you will learn how cryptic clues are constructed and how to solve them, exploring devices such as anagrams, hidden words, charades and double definitions. Although the clues can seem baffling at first, they follow a precise set of conventions that can be learned and applied. Along the way, you will develop vocabulary, pattern recognition, logical reasoning and an appreciation of one of the most ingenious forms of wordplay in the English language.

THE BLOOD, THE COUNTRY AND THE ROAD: CORMAC MCCARTHY IN LITERATURE AND FILM

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

What happens when civilisation breaks down? Across the American frontier, the modern Mexican border and a world devastated by catastrophe, Cormac McCarthy's novels explore violence, survival and the moral choices people make when law and order disappear. His writing combines unforgettable imagery with philosophical depth and has inspired acclaimed films such as *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road*. This course introduces a selection of his major novels and their adaptations for the screen, while also exploring his influence on contemporary cinema, television and video games.

GROUP D: LIFE SKILLS AND WELLBEING

THINKING, FAST AND SLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BETTER DECISIONS

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

Even when we believe we are being rational, our thinking is often shaped by bias, habit and instinct. Why do we jump to conclusions, trust our intuition too readily, or make the same mistakes again and again? This course explores how and why our minds can mislead us, and what we can do to make better decisions in everyday life. At its heart is the idea that

we use two types of thinking: System 1, which is fast, emotional and automatic, and System 2, which is slower, more analytical and deliberate. By understanding how these systems work, you will learn to recognise common mental pitfalls and develop strategies for clearer, more effective thinking in study, work and life.

SPORTS NUTRITION

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

How should you fuel your body before, during and after exercise? Whether you are a professional athlete in training or simply exercising to improve your mental and physical health, sports nutrition plays a key role in maximising the benefits of physical activity. In this course you will learn about the importance of fuelling your body with the right foods before, during and



after exercise. We will explore how the body uses carbohydrates, fats and proteins, the role of hydration, and how nutritional needs vary according to different sports and training goals. The course will also examine common myths about diet and performance, helping you to make informed choices about nutrition, fitness and wellbeing.

NEURODIVERSITY

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

Have you ever wondered what makes our brains unique and how different ways of thinking can change the world? Let us embrace the power of different minds, explore what neurodiversity means, and learn more about autism, ADHD and dyslexia. This course will also provide opportunities to reflect on topics such as identity, empathy (the ability to understand the feelings of others) and belonging. The course will help you boost agency (the power to be an active agent in your own learning) and will equip you with valuable skills, such as self-efficacy, in life and for any career.

WILL YOU LIVE LONGER ON A HEALTHY DIET?

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

Over the course of the last half-century, human health has generally deteriorated, and today more people than ever are suffering from chronic conditions. Much of this is down to what they eat. We are surrounded by advice about what to eat, but how much of it is true? This course investigates the science behind diet and long-term health. You will look at how food choices affect the body, examine the impact of sugar, fat and processed food, and explore what research says about how to live longer, healthier lives. With a mix of science, debate and myth-busting, the course will help you cut through the noise and make sense of one of the biggest health challenges of our time.

ESSENTIAL DIY SKILLS

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This is a practical course covering the essential skills that everyone needs to fix, maintain and improve things around the home. You will learn how to put up a shelf, choose and use the right tools for different jobs, assemble a useful toolkit, and carry out a range of simple household repairs with confidence. Along the way, we will explore basic DIY techniques, common mistakes to avoid, and the science behind everyday materials and adhesives, including why superglue is not always as super as it sounds.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

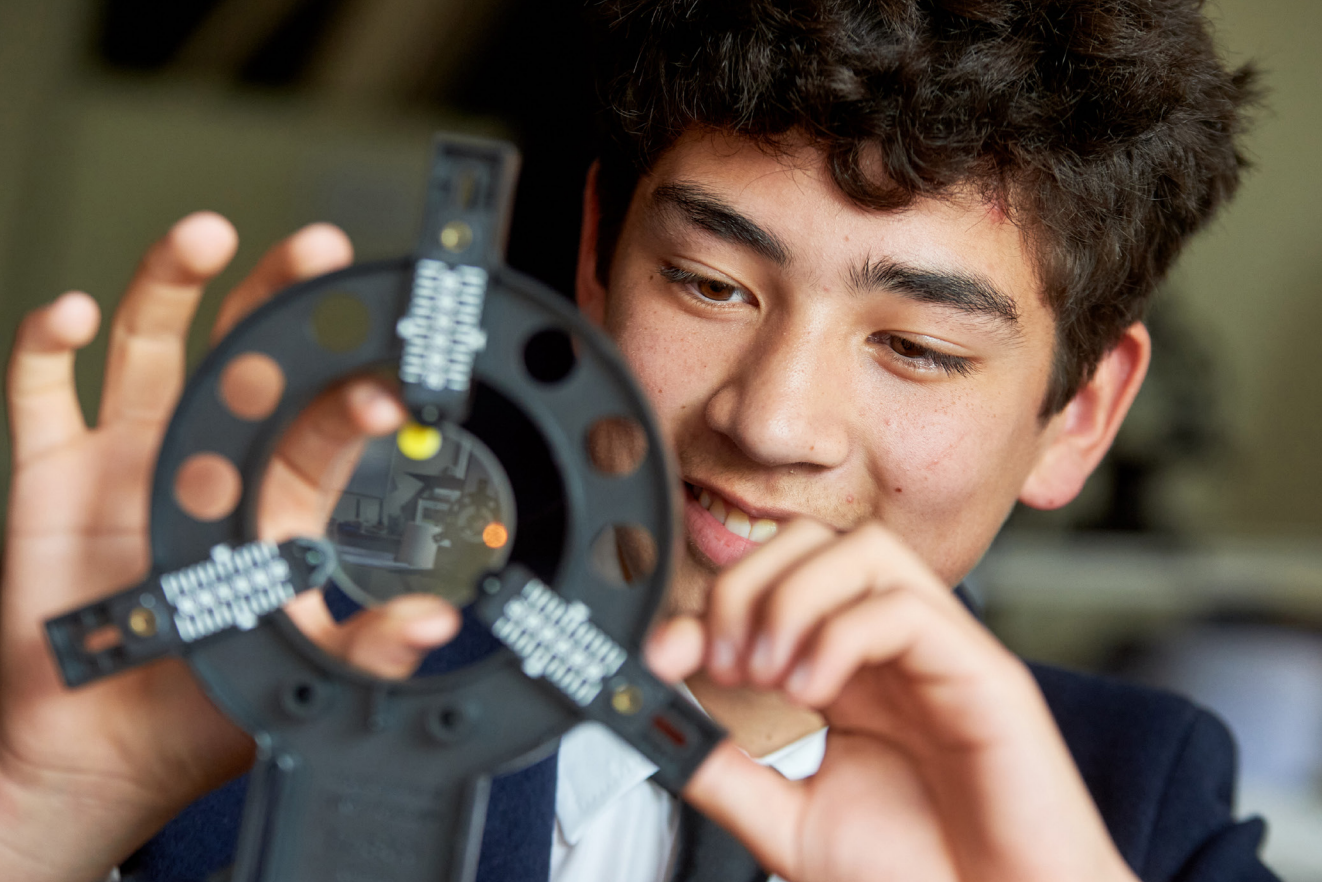
This course is designed to equip you with the practical knowledge and skills needed to manage your personal finances with confidence. You will learn how to carry out key financial calculations using Excel, and explore topics such as shares, bonds, futures and options, pensions, annuities, ISAs, student loans, credit cards and taxation. Whether you are planning for university or simply want to understand how money works, the course offers a flexible structure that allows for discussion and exploration of areas that interest you most.

INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES

THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR BANANA

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

How can a banana that was bought for 35 cents in the morning sell for USD 6 million that evening? This was what happened in November 2024 when Maurizio Cattelan’s work The Comedian went to auction in Sotheby’s in New York. A week later, the



buyer (a cryptocurrency entrepreneur) ate the artwork in front of the world’s media. This course will consider the mechanisms of the art market, its intersection with the digital economy and a history of conceptual art.

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE: SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course focuses on sustainability and the urgent challenges facing our planet today, from climate change and pollution to energy use and resource scarcity. You will explore why these issues matter, what is currently being done to address them, and what new solutions might be possible. You will design your own ‘blueprint for the future’, drawing together ideas from across the course to tackle these problems in a joined-up, creative way. Your plan might just offer a solution that helps save the planet.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ECONOMICS

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

This course explores how ideas about wealth, markets, society and human behaviour have evolved over time. Beginning with Aristotle and the economic thought of the ancient world, you will move on to examine the contributions of St Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Khaldun, before tracing the rise of mercantilism, physiocracy and Adam Smith’s analytical economics. We will then examine the ideas of Ricardo, Malthus, Owen, Leverhulme and Marx, exploring their responses to poverty, exploitation and social change. From

Veblen’s critique of consumer society to Keynes’s rescue of capitalism, Schumpeter’s contradictions and modern behavioural economics, you will discover the philosophical foundations underlying economic theory.

NEW BUSINESS PITCH

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

In pairs or threes, you will prepare and present a new business idea. In marketing, we will analyse innovative advertising campaigns created by some of the world’s leading agencies, before producing a short video to showcase your own campaign. In finance, we will use Excel to make a break-even chart and budget as well as thinking about sources of finance. We will also look at production, staffing and HR. The course will end with each group presenting their idea to the rest of the class, with the potential to win the very prestigious prize of best business idea.

GAME THEORY

Course duration: short course (10 lessons)

Game theory studies how people make decisions when the outcome depends not only on their own choices but also on the choices of others. It has wide-ranging applications from crime and economics to international politics, business negotiation and even football penalty shootouts. In this course you will explore famous scenarios like ‘The Prisoner’s Dilemma’ and ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ and examine what they reveal about behaviour. Along the way you will play some of the games yourself, testing how theory holds up in practice and learning how strategic thinking can help you in everyday life.







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