The Purbeck School
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OPTIONS HANDBOOK



2027

INTRODUCTION

Dear Purbeck families,

Choosing the subjects that you want to study in Years 10 and 11 is an exciting moment in your school journey. For the first time, you have the chance to shape a curriculum that reflects your interests, strengths, and future ambitions. This booklet will guide you through the subjects available, explain what each course involves, and help you make confident, informed decisions about the next stage of your education. As you explore your choices, think boldly about what inspires you and where you want your learning to take you.

When designing our school curriculum, we have carefully considered:

- The importance of securing a strong set of GCSEs, including English, Maths and Science
- Providing as much choice as possible while maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum
- Preparing students for their future pathways, including Further and Higher Education

In the coming weeks, your child will be asked to make several decisions about the courses they will study. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a degree of choice, and your role as parents is vital in guiding and encouraging them as they enter this significant stage of their education.

Please take time to read this booklet carefully and explore the subject presentations available on our Options website, which explain each course in more detail. We also encourage you to speak with subject teachers at the Year 9 Parents' Evening and make use of the support available both in school and online.

It is especially important to consider the longer-term implications of your child's choices, including how these decisions may influence future career pathways and access to Further or Higher Education. Many Post-16 courses, such as A-levels, require students to have studied the subject at GCSE, so early planning is essential.

While we will do our very best to accommodate all students' preferences, it may not be possible to offer every first or second choice. Our commitment is to provide the widest possible range of courses and the highest-quality guidance throughout the process.

We hope you find this booklet, and the online resources, informative and helpful. If you have any questions about the options process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

Carl Morris
Deputy Headteacher
The Purbeck School
cmorris@purbeck.wessex.ac

OUR OPTIONS TIMELINE

Please take a moment to review the timeline for this year's Options Process.

Students will be introduced to the process through a dedicated assembly. Our Year 9 Parents' Evening and Options Evening provide valuable opportunities for you to speak with subject teachers and Heads of Department about the courses your child is considering.

The next stage will be the completion of a personalised online options form. If any issues arise with a student's choices, we will contact them directly. Courses will be allocated as forms are submitted. While we will make every effort to offer students their preferred options, **we cannot guarantee this**. If a particular combination is not possible, reserve subjects will be allocated automatically.

DEC 9TH	• Year 9 Options Assembly
DEC 10TH	• Parent Options Information Evening
JAN 14TH	• Subject Parents Evening
JAN 15TH	• Online Options form open
JAN 29TH	• Deadline for options forms to have been returned

After Easter, we will send a letter home confirming your child's final option choices.

If your child has any specific questions on the options process, then they can book an Options Guidance Interview with Mr Morris by email at cmorris@purbeck.wessex.ac.

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GCSE GRADING SYSTEM

GCSEs were reformed in 2017 and are now designed to be more demanding than their predecessors. In addition, all GCSEs are now graded from 9 to 1, replacing A* to G.

The table shows how the old and new grading system can be compared:

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

Tiered Exams

Tiered exams only apply to the subjects of Maths, Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish), Separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) and Combined Science.

- Foundation tier will cover grades 1 to 5
- Higher tier will cover grades 4 to 9

OUR CORE CURRICULUM

As required by the National Curriculum, we have 'core' subjects which all students must follow. The compulsory core studies are:

- English – leading to two GCSEs: English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics – leading to one GCSE
- Science
- Physical Education – not examined
- Professional Development – not examined
- Religious Studies – not examined

The Sciences

Students will be guided by their science teachers to study either the three separate sciences – Biology, Chemistry and Physics – or study GCSE Combined Science, which is equivalent to two GCSEs. This decision will not limit the optional subjects available to them.

For students considering a science-based career, such as medicine, veterinary science, or a science degree at university, studying the separate sciences is generally more advantageous than Combined Science. Throughout Year 9, science teachers will support parents and students in understanding both pathways and in selecting the most appropriate course.

English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The following subjects are known as "EBacc" subjects. As part of their options, students must choose AT LEAST ONE from:

- French
- Geography
- History
- Separate (Triple) Sciences
- Spanish

VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

In addition to GCSEs, students also have the opportunity to study subjects commonly referred to as vocational qualifications. These courses include examinations in both Year 10 and Year 11 and place a greater emphasis on coursework, which is assessed throughout the two-year programme. They are rigorous, high-quality qualifications that carry GCSE equivalence and provide a strong foundation for progression to Level 3 study.

At The Purbeck School, we offer:

- **OCR National Certificate in Health and Social Care**
- **OCR National Certificate in Sport Studies**

Vocational qualifications are graded differently to GCSEs. This is how they compare:

Level 2 Distinction *	one GCSE grade 8 – 9
Level 2 Distinction	one GCSE grade 7
Level 2 Merit	one GCSE grade 5 – 6
Level 2 Pass	one GCSE grade 4
Level 1 Pass	one GCSE grade 1 – 3

HOMEWORK AND NON-EXAM ASSESSMENTS

Homework

During Years 10 and 11, students will be set home learning on a regular basis. This helps them develop important skills in organising their work and working independently. Homework provides valuable opportunities to consolidate learning from lessons, prepare for upcoming tasks, and carry out research. It also enables teachers to gauge how well students are understanding the material.

Students will receive a **GCSE Homework and Revision Booklet**, which outlines their homework schedule and offers guidance on effective revision strategies for each subject.

Non-Exam Assessment

Non-exam assessment (NEA) refers to the internally assessed components of certain Key Stage 4 courses. These are substantial pieces of work completed in school as part of a GCSE qualification.

NEAs contribute towards a student's final GCSE grade. The weighting varies by subject, and in some cases, the NEA can account for up to 50% of the overall grade.

NEAs differ from the previous system of GCSE coursework. Students may be given a set number of hours to complete the task or a maximum word limit for the final piece. The level of control varies between subjects: some assessments must be completed individually under exam-style conditions, while others allow group work and more flexible arrangements. The level of control is determined by the nature of the task.

NEAs must be completed in school, under teacher supervision, ensuring fairness for all students and preventing highly motivated students from spending excessive time on a single piece of work.

UNIVERSITY STUDY

It may feel a long way off, but if you are considering applying to a competitive university, and particularly to a highly selective course, it is important to be aware of all aspects of the entry requirements, including GCSE expectations.

The summary below offers an indication of the types of GCSE requirements you may encounter for certain degree pathways. These examples are for guidance only. Always check individual university websites for full, up-to-date information before applying. Further guidance can also be found on the UCAS website: www.ucas.com

- Applicants for **Medicine** are usually expected to have excellent GCSE results (typically grades 8 or 9) in **English, Maths, and Science**
- For an **English** degree, an A level in English is essential, and some universities may also expect a GCSE in a **Modern Foreign Language** or **History**
- For **Psychology**, a grade 6 in **Maths**, and sometimes **Science**, is often required

What subjects at A Level give me the most options?

Many university courses build on the knowledge and skills developed during school. Where this is the case, universities need to ensure that applicants have prepared themselves appropriately and are ready to meet the demands of their chosen course.

As a result, some degree programmes require students to have studied specific subjects at advanced level, while others are more flexible. However, certain subjects are more commonly required than others. These are known as the '**facilitating subjects**', and they are:

- English Literature
- Maths (and Further Maths)
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Geography
- History
- Modern Foreign Language (like French or Spanish)

UCAS is the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education but it also includes information and services for prospective students. Check out their website for more information: www.ucas.com

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GENERAL GUIDANCE

DO:

- choose courses you are interested in
- choose courses you know you will enjoy
- choose a range of different courses, so that you have a broad base from which to choose your post-16 courses
- read the subject information on the next few pages very carefully
- ask the advice of your subject teachers, your tutor and our careers adviser
- discuss it with your parents
- THINK VERY CAREFULLY about the subjects you choose. It will NOT be possible to change course once you have started

DON'T:

- choose a course simply because your friends have
- allow either a like or dislike of particular teachers to influence your choice
- choose a course because you think it might be easy
- make your decision hastily
- drop any subject you may want to study after Year 11
- drop any subject you may require for entry to a particular occupation or course of further study

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WHERE TO GET HELP

There is a wide range of help and support available in school throughout the Options process.

- **Book an Options Guidance Interview with Mr Morris** – If your child has specific questions about the options process, they can email Mr Morris at cmorris@purbeck.wessex.ac

- **Book a Careers Appointment** – If your child would like to explore pathways into particular careers or discuss future ambitions, they can arrange a one-to-one meeting with our Careers Advisor by emailing Mrs M Scott at mscott@purbeck.wessex.ac

- **Talk to Subject Teachers** – If your child has questions about a subject, such as how it is assessed or where it may lead, please encourage them to speak with their subject teachers or the relevant Head of Department

- **Talk to Their Tutor** – Your child's tutor knows their strengths, motivations and interests well. Encourage them to speak with their tutor for guidance on which subjects complement each other and suit their aspirations.

Students can also access a range of high-quality online resources to help them make informed choices about their options for Year 10 and 11. These include:

- **Unifrog** – a comprehensive platform, which we subscribe to, that supports students in comparing subjects, careers, and next steps

- **UCAS** – provides guidance on future university courses and the subjects that may be required or recommended

- **National Careers Service** – offers detailed job profiles, required qualifications, and career pathways

- **BBC Bitesize** – explains GCSE subjects, assessment methods, and what each course involves

- **CareerPilot** – helps students explore careers, qualifications, and future study routes

These sites help students understand how their GCSE choices link to future study and career options, giving them confidence as they make their decisions.

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OPTIONS APPLICATION FORM

Application form for courses starting September 2027

- Our online application form will be open for completion between **Friday 15th January and Friday 29th January 2027**.
- All students **must** include **at least one of:** Geography; History; French; Spanish.
- Places will be assigned on a first come first served basis as forms are returned.
- While we will make every effort to offer students their preferred options, **we cannot guarantee this**, as not all subject combinations are possible. If there is a problem with a combination, reserve subjects will be used automatically.

1. From the following subjects, please choose **three** subjects in priority order and two **reserves**:

• GCSE Business Studies	• GCSE Media Studies
• GCSE Computer Science	• GCSE Music
• GCSE French	• GCSE Photography
• GCSE Geography	• GCSE Philosophy Religion & Ethics
• GCSE Geology	• GCSE Spanish
• L1/2 Health & Social Care	• L1/2 Sport Studies
• GCSE History	

Priority subject 1:	
Priority subject 2:	
Priority subject 3:	
Reserve subject 1:	
Reserve subject 2:	

2. In addition to the subjects above, please select **one** subject from the following, as well as one **reserve** subject:

• GCSE Art	• GCSE Photography
• GCSE Drama	• GCSE Product Design
• GCSE Food Preparation & Nutrition	• L1/2 Sport Studies

Priority subject 1:	
Reserve subject 1:	

Student signature:		Parent signature:	

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COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

What will I study?

Students studying AQA GCSE English Language will explore a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts, learning how writers use language and structure to influence their readers. They will develop their own creative and transactional writing skills, crafting engaging narratives, viewpoints and arguments. The course also builds confident communication through speaking and listening activities, helping students' express ideas clearly and effectively. Overall, it strengthens essential skills that support success across all subjects and future pathways.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written exam papers**, taken at the end of the course. These exams test their ability to analyse a range of unseen fiction and non-fiction texts, exploring how writers use language and structure to create effects. Students also produce their own creative and transactional writing, demonstrating clarity, accuracy and an ability to engage the reader.

In addition, students complete a **Spoken Language endorsement**, where they deliver a presentation and respond to questions. This does not contribute to the final GCSE grade but is reported separately and recognises confident, effective communication.

Further study links

- **A-Levels** – Many students progress to A-Level English Language, English Literature, or combined Language & Literature, developing deeper analytical and communication skills
- **Level 3 vocational courses** – Options such as media, journalism, business, or creative writing courses build on the writing and interpretation skills gained at GCSE
- **Apprenticeships** – Strong English skills support routes in marketing, digital content, customer service, administration and many other sectors

Career opportunities

Journalism, media, law, teaching, marketing, publishing, the creative industries and more!

Student view

"GCSE English Language has helped me understand how writers shape meaning and express their own ideas with confidence".

Contact:	Mr Basford (jbasford@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

What will I study?

Students studying GCSE English Literature will explore a rich selection of novels, plays and poetry from across different periods and cultures. They learn how writers use language, structure and themes to create meaning, and they develop their own interpretations through close reading and discussion. The course encourages students to think critically, appreciate literary heritage and express their ideas with clarity and confidence – skills that support success across many subjects.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written exam papers**, both taken at the end of the course. Across the two papers, they will write analytical essays on the set texts they have studied, demonstrating their understanding of characters, themes, context and writers' methods. The exams require students to respond to questions on Shakespeare, a 19th-century novel, a modern text and a poetry anthology, as well as unseen poetry.

Further study links

- **A-Levels** – Many students progress to A-Level English Literature, English Language, or combined Language & Literature, where they explore texts in greater depth
- **Level 3 vocational courses** – Subjects such as media, performing arts, creative writing or humanities-based courses build on analytical and communication skills developed at GCSE
- **Apprenticeships** – Strong reading, writing and critical-thinking skills support routes into areas like marketing, publishing, education support, and customer-facing roles

Career opportunities

Journalism, media, law, teaching, marketing, publishing, the creative industries and more!

Student view

"GCSE English Literature let me explore powerful stories and poems while learning to share their own interpretations with confidence".

Contact:	Mr Basford (jbasford@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE MATHEMATICS

What will I study?

Students studying AQA GCSE Maths will build on the knowledge gained in Years 7 – 9, developing confidence in number, algebra, geometry and problem-solving. They will learn how to apply mathematical methods to real-life situations, interpret data, and tackle multi-step problems with increasing independence. The course is designed to strengthen logical thinking and analytical skills, giving students a strong foundation for further study and a wide range of future careers.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **three written exam papers**, all taken at the end of the course. One paper is **non-calculator**, while the other two allow calculator use. Each paper tests a mix of number, algebra, geometry, ratio, probability and statistics, with questions ranging from straightforward skills to multi-step problem-solving. All three papers contribute equally to the final grade, giving students the chance to demonstrate both their mathematical knowledge and their ability to apply it in different contexts.

Further study links

- **A-Levels** – maths and further maths are popular next steps, along with subjects like physics or economics
- **Level 3 vocational courses** – options such as engineering, IT or business-related courses build on strong numeracy and problem-solving skills
- **Apprenticeships** – many technical and professional routes, including finance, construction and digital roles, value solid mathematical understanding

Career opportunities

Engineering, finance, computing, architecture, construction, business, science, digital technology and more!

Student view

“GCSE Maths helped me make sense of real-world problems and gave me confidence in using numbers every day.”

Contact:	Mr Morris (cmorris@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE SEPARATE SCIENCES

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Separate Sciences study biology, chemistry and physics as three individual GCSEs, allowing them to explore each discipline in greater depth. They investigate key ideas such as cell biology and human systems, chemical reactions and the structure of matter, and energy, forces and waves. Through practical experiments and scientific enquiry, students develop strong analytical skills and a deeper understanding of how science explains the world around us.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **six written exam papers** – two each for biology, chemistry and physics – taken at the end of the course. Each paper tests understanding of key scientific ideas, the ability to apply knowledge to new situations and the skills gained through practical work. Questions range from short answers to longer, structured responses that require explanation and analysis. The three sciences are awarded **as separate GCSEs**, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths in each discipline.

Further study links

- **A-Levels in Biology, Chemistry or Physics** – ideal for students who want to specialise and deepen their scientific understanding
- **Level 3 vocational science courses** – such as applied science, engineering or health-related courses
- **Science-related apprenticeships** – including laboratory technician roles, engineering pathways or healthcare support

Career opportunities

Healthcare, engineering, environmental science, forensics, laboratory work, veterinary care, technology and more!

Student view

“GCSE Separate Sciences lets me explore each subject in more depth and really understand how biology, chemistry and physics work in the real world.”

Contact:	Mr Foyle (jfoyle@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE COMBINED SCIENCE

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Combined Science study biology, chemistry and physics as an integrated double award, giving them a broad and balanced understanding of the scientific world. They explore key ideas such as cells and organisms, chemical reactions and the periodic table, and energy, forces and electricity. Through regular practical work, they develop investigative skills, learn to analyse data and apply scientific thinking to real-life situations.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **six written exam papers** – two each for biology, chemistry and physics – taken at the end of the course. These papers test their understanding of key scientific ideas, their ability to apply knowledge to new contexts and the practical skills they have developed throughout the course. Questions range from short factual responses to longer explanations and data-analysis tasks. Combined Science is awarded as a **double GCSE**, giving students a broad and balanced scientific foundation for future study and career pathways.

Further study links

- **A-Levels in Biology, Chemistry or Physics** – a strong next step for students who want to deepen their scientific knowledge
- **Level 3 vocational science courses** – such as applied science, engineering or health-related courses
- **Science-related apprenticeships** – including laboratory technician roles, engineering pathways or healthcare support

Career opportunities

Healthcare, engineering, environmental science, forensics, laboratory work, veterinary care, technology and more!

Student view

“GCSE Combined Science gives me a solid understanding of all three sciences and helps me see how biology, chemistry and physics connect in real life.”

Contact:	Mr Foyle (jfoyle@purbeck.wessex.ac)

OPTION SUBJECTS

GCSE ART

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Art explore a wide range of creative techniques and materials, including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture and mixed media. They investigate the work of artists, designers and craftspeople, using this research to inspire and develop their own ideas. Throughout the course, students build a personal portfolio that shows experimentation, refinement of skills and thoughtful presentation of their work. This subject encourages creativity, independence and visual communication, helping students' express ideas in imaginative and meaningful ways.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through a combination of **portfolio work** and an **externally set assignment**. The portfolio, completed throughout the course, showcases their ability to develop ideas, experiment with materials and refine their skills. The externally set assignment includes a preparatory period followed by a **10-hour practical exam**, where students create a final piece in response to a given theme. Together, these components assess creativity, technical ability and the journey from initial ideas to finished artwork.

Further study links

- **A-Level Fine Art** – for students who want to continue developing their creative and technical skills
- **Level 3 vocational art and design courses** – such as courses in Art & Design, Graphics, Photography or Fashion
- **Creative apprenticeships** – including roles in design studios, galleries, media production or craft industries

Career opportunities

Graphic design, illustration, architecture, fashion, photography, animation, interior design, advertising and more!

Student view

"GCSE Fine Art gives me the freedom to be creative and helps me to express my ideas in my own unique way."

Contact:	Mrs Field (lfield@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE BUSINESS STUDIES

What will I study?

Students taking Edexcel GCSE Business Studies explore how businesses operate and make decisions, from spotting opportunities and understanding customers to managing finance, marketing and human resources. They learn how external factors, such as the economy, competition and technology, shape business activity, and they investigate real-world case studies to see these ideas in action. Throughout the course, students develop analytical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills that help them understand how organisations succeed and grow.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written exam papers**, each covering different aspects of how businesses operate and make decisions. Both papers include a mix of multiple-choice questions, short answers and longer, structured responses based on real-world business scenarios. These assessments test students' ability to apply business knowledge, analyse information and justify decisions. Together, the papers provide a balanced measure of understanding across all areas of the course.

Further study links

- **A-Level Business** – ideal for students who want to deepen their understanding of how organisations operate
- **Level 3 vocational business courses** – such as Business, Enterprise or Marketing
- **Business-related apprenticeships** – including roles in administration, retail, finance, customer service or digital marketing

Career opportunities

Marketing, finance, retail, management, human resources, entrepreneurship and more!

Student view

"GCSE Business Studies helps me understand how real businesses work and gives me practical skills I can use in everyday life and future careers."

Contact:	Mr Finean (cfinean@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE COMPUTER SCIENCE

What will I study?

Students taking OCR GCSE Computer Science learn how computers work and how they are used to solve real-world problems. The course covers programming**,** algorithms**,** data representation**,** computer systems**,** networks, and the ethical and environmental impact of technology. Students develop practical coding skills through hands-on programming tasks, learning how to design, write and test their own solutions. Throughout the course, they build strong logical-thinking and problem-solving skills that prepare them for further study in computing and the wider digital world.

Students should only opt for this course if they are on track to achieve a Maths grade 6+

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written exam papers**, each testing different aspects of the course. One paper focuses on the theory of computer systems, covering hardware, software, networks and the impact of technology. The second paper assesses computational thinking, algorithms and programming, requiring students to apply their problem-solving skills to practical scenarios. Together, these exams measure both their understanding of how computers work and their ability to think logically and design effective solutions.

Further study links

- **A-Level Computer Science** – ideal for students who want to deepen their understanding of programming and computational thinking.
- **Level 3 vocational IT or computing courses** – such as in IT, Digital Technology or Cybersecurity.
- **Digital and technology apprenticeships** – including roles in software development, IT support, networking or data analysis

Career opportunities

Software development, cybersecurity, data analysis, artificial intelligence, IT support, network engineering, digital media and more!

Student view

“GCSE Computer Science helps me understand how technology really works and lets me use coding to solve problems in a creative way”

Contact:	Mr Keegan (tkeegan@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE DRAMA

What will I study?

Students taking Edexcel GCSE Drama explore how performance works both on stage and behind the scenes**,** developing practical skills in acting, devising and interpreting scripts. They study a range of theatrical styles, practitioners and play texts, learning how to bring characters and ideas to life through voice, movement and staging. Students also analyse live theatre to understand how performers, designers and directors create impact. Throughout the course, they build creativity, confidence and teamwork as they develop and refine their own performances.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through a combination of **practical performance work** and **written examination**. They will devise an original piece of drama, perform extracts from a published play, and complete a written portfolio that explains their creative choices. The final written exam tests their understanding of a set text and their ability to analyse live theatre. Together, these components assess creativity, performance skills and the ability to reflect on how drama communicates meaning.

Further study links

- **A-Level Drama and Theatre** – for students who want to develop their performance, directing or design skills.
- **Level 3 vocational performing arts courses** – such as in Acting, Musical Theatre or Production Arts.
- **Creative and performing arts apprenticeships**

Career opportunities

Acting, directing, stage management, theatre design, arts administration, media, events management, public relations and more!

Student view

“GCSE Drama lets me be creative, build confidence and work as part of a team to bring ideas to life”

Contact:	Mrs Shannessy (CShannessy@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition explore the science behind food, learning how ingredients work and how to prepare dishes safely and skilfully. They study nutrition, healthy eating, food provenance and the impact of food choices, alongside developing practical cooking techniques through a wide range of hands-on tasks. Throughout the course, students investigate ingredients, experiment with recipes and build confidence in planning and producing high-quality dishes, gaining valuable life skills and a strong foundation for further study in food and nutrition.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through a combination of **non-examined assessment (NEA)** and a final **written exam**. The NEA includes a food investigation, where students explore the scientific principles behind ingredients, and a practical food preparation task in which they plan, cook and present a range of dishes. The written exam tests their understanding of nutrition, food science, food safety and food choices. Together, these components assess both theoretical knowledge and practical cooking skills, giving a well-rounded picture of each student's ability.

Further study links

- **A-Level Food Science and Nutrition** – for students who want to deepen their understanding of food science and dietary needs
- **Level 3 vocational courses in hospitality or catering** – such as in Hospitality, Professional Cookery or Food Science
- **Apprenticeships in the food industry** – including roles in catering, bakery, food production or hospitality services

Career opportunities

Hospitality, catering, food science, product development, nutrition, dietetics, food manufacturing and more!

Student view

"GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition helps me become more confident in the kitchen while understanding how to make healthy, tasty meals"

Contact:	Mrs Schubert (vschubert@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE FRENCH

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE French develop their ability to communicate confidently in a modern foreign language while exploring French-speaking cultures around the world. The course covers topics such as family and relationships, leisure, technology, school, future plans, global issues and travel, giving students the vocabulary and structures, they need to express themselves in real-life situations. They build skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, learning how to understand authentic texts and hold conversations with increasing accuracy and fluency.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed across the four key language skills: **listening, speaking, reading and writing**. Each skill is tested in a separate exam, and all four are equally weighted. The assessments include understanding spoken and written French, translating to and from French, and completing a structured speaking exam involving role-play, photo cards and general conversation. Together, these components give students the chance to show how well they can communicate and understand French in real-life contexts.

Further study links

- **A-Level French** – ideal for students who want to develop higher-level language skills and cultural understanding
- **Level 3 vocational language or travel courses** – such as in Travel and Tourism or Applied Languages
- **Language-focused apprenticeships** – including roles in customer service, international business, hospitality or tourism where French is an advantage

Career opportunities

International business, tourism, translation and interpreting, diplomacy, journalism, education and more!

Student view

“GCSE French helps me communicate in a new language and discover different cultures”

Contact:	Mrs West (lwest@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE GEOGRAPHY

What will I study?

Students taking OCR B GCSE Geography explore how people interact with the world around them through a mix of physical and human geography. They study global hazards, climate change, distinctive landscapes, urban futures and resource management, building a clear understanding of the challenges facing our planet. Fieldwork is a key element, giving students the chance to investigate real-world geographical questions and apply their skills outside the classroom.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through a combination of **three written exams**. The exams test their understanding of global issues, physical and human geography, and their ability to apply knowledge to real-world scenarios. Students also complete **fieldwork**, which is assessed through questions in the final exams, requiring them to analyse data, interpret evidence and reflect on their investigations. Together, these components assess not only what students know, but how well they can think like geographers.

Further study links

- **A-Level Geography** – for students who want to deepen their understanding of physical and human geography.
- **Level 3 vocational courses in travel, tourism or environmental studies** – such as in Travel and Tourism or Environmental Sustainability.
- **Apprenticeships linked to planning, surveying or environmental management**

Career opportunities

Environmental management, urban planning, sustainability, geology, cartography, disaster response, travel and tourism, international development and more!

Student view

“GCSE Geography helps me understand the world better and make sense of the places and people around them”

Contact:	Mrs Taylor (etaylor@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE GEOLOGY

What will I study?

Being lucky enough to be situated within the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, we simply have to offer students the opportunity to study GCSE Geology. Students taking Eduqas GCSE Geology explore the processes that shape the Earth, developing an understanding of rocks, minerals, fossils and the dynamic forces that create landscapes. They study topics such as plate tectonics, earthquakes, volcanoes, geological time, natural resources and environmental change, learning how evidence from the past helps us interpret the world today. Through practical work and field-based investigations, students build strong scientific skills and discover how geology connects to real-world issues like energy, hazards and sustainability.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written exams** and a **practical geology assessment**. The written papers test their understanding of key geological concepts, including Earth processes, rocks and minerals, fossils, resources and geological hazards. The practical assessment focuses on **geological skills**, such as interpreting maps, analysing data and applying knowledge to real-world scenarios. Together, these components give students the chance to demonstrate both their scientific understanding and their ability to think and work like geologists.

Further study links

- **A-Level Geology** – ideal for students who want to deepen their understanding of Earth processes and geological science
- **Level 3 vocational courses in environmental science or engineering** – such as in Applied Science or Environmental Sustainability
- **Apprenticeships in geology-related fields** – including roles in surveying, environmental consultancy or engineering geology

Career opportunities

Environmental science, engineering, surveying, energy industries, hazard management, conservation and more!

Student view

“GCSE Geology helps me understand how the Earth works and why our landscapes look the way they do”

Contact:	Mr Hobbs (dhobbs@purbeck.wessex.ac)

OCR CAMBRIDGE NATIONAL CERTIFICATE IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

What will I study?

Students taking the OCR Cambridge National Certificate in Health and Social Care explore how health, wellbeing and care services support individuals throughout their lives. They study key topics such as human growth and development, health needs, care values, communication skills and the roles of professionals in different care settings. Through practical tasks and real-world scenarios, students learn how to apply care principles, understand the challenges faced by service users, and develop the interpersonal skills needed for future study or work in the health and social care sector

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through a combination of **internally assessed coursework units** and an **externally assessed exam**. The coursework allows students to apply their knowledge to realistic scenarios, demonstrating their understanding of care values, communication skills and the needs of individuals in different settings. The external exam tests their grasp of key concepts in health and wellbeing. Together, these assessments give students the chance to show both their practical skills and their theoretical understanding of the health and social care sector.

Further study links

- **Level 3 Health and Social Care courses** – such as OCR Cambridge Technicals, ideal for developing deeper sector knowledge
- **A-Level subjects linked to care** – including Psychology, Sociology or Biology, which complement health-related study
- **Health and care-related apprenticeships** – offering practical routes into roles such as support work, childcare or healthcare assistance

Career opportunities

Nursing, midwifery, social work, childcare, counselling, therapy services, public health and more!

Student view

“Health and Social Care helps me understand how to support people and make a positive difference in their lives”

Contact:	Miss Stewart (cstewart@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE HISTORY

What will I study?

Students who take Eduqas GCSE History develop a rich understanding of the forces that have shaped our country and the wider world. We study the history of medicine to appreciate how ideas and perseverance can drive progress; we explore Nazi Germany to recognise the dangers of extreme beliefs. We examine the United States to see how one nation has influenced - and still influences - modern society; and we investigate the Elizabethans to understand how a single leader can leave a lasting mark on history.

How will I be assessed?

GCSE History is assessed through **four examinations** at the end of Year 11. Earlier study in Years 7, 8 and 9 has already given students the core skills they need: drawing inferences from sources, analysing people and events, and explaining historical change. Across these papers, students demonstrate their understanding of thematic developments, focused depth studies and wider world history. This structure enables them to showcase both strong subject knowledge and thoughtful, critical engagement with the past.

Further study links

- **A-Level History** – a strong next step for developing deeper analytical and evaluative skills, and understanding more about an ever-changing world.
- **A-Levels in related subjects** – such as Politics, Sociology, Law, Geography or English Literature, which complement historical study.
- **Level 3 vocational courses or apprenticeships** – particularly in areas like heritage, public services or education support.

Career opportunities

Law, finance, journalism, politics, archaeology, heritage and museum work, education, public services, business, genealogy, civil service, and more!

Student view

"GCSE History helps me to think deeply and critically about the complicated world I live in. My historical knowledge and skills have prepared me for my future.**"**

Contact:	Mr Whiter (twhiter@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE MEDIA STUDIES

What will I study?

Students taking Eduqas GCSE Media will explore how media products are created, consumed and interpreted in the modern world. They study a wide range of forms, including television, film marketing, magazines, advertising, online media and video games, analysing how meanings are constructed through images, language and representation. Students also develop practical skills by planning and producing their own media work, giving them hands-on experience of creative design, digital editing and communicating to an audience.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written examination papers** and a **non-exam assessment (NEA)**. The exam papers test their ability to analyse media products, explore how meanings are created, and apply key concepts such as representation, audience and industry. The NEA gives students the chance to **plan and produce their own media product**, demonstrating practical creativity and technical skills. Together, these components allow students to show both their understanding of the media world and their ability to create effective media of their own.

Further study links

- **A-Level Media Studies** – a direct progression for developing deeper analytical and production skills.
- **Level 3 creative and digital media courses** – such as media, film or digital content creation.
- **Apprenticeships in creative industries** – including roles in digital marketing, content production or junior media assistant positions

Career opportunities

Journalism, advertising, film and TV production, digital marketing, graphic design, social media management, game development and more!

Student view

“GCSE Media helps me understand how the media influences everyday life and gives them a creative way to express ideas”

Contact:	Mrs Hagan (vhagan@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE MUSIC

What will I study?

Students taking Eduqas GCSE Music explore performing, composing and understanding music across a wide range of styles and traditions. They study musical elements, notation, set works and different genres, developing their ability to listen critically and explain how music is created and structured. Through practical performance and original composition, students build confidence, creativity and technical skill, while also learning how music reflects culture, emotion and identity.

There is an expectation that students should have some ability and experience with playing an instrument or singing in order to thrive on this course.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **three key components** that reflect the balance of practical and theoretical learning in the course. They will complete **performances** on their chosen instrument or voice, showing both solo and ensemble skills. They will also produce **two original compositions**, demonstrating creativity and understanding of musical techniques. Finally, students sit a **listening and appraising exam**, where they analyse set works, respond to unfamiliar music and apply their knowledge of musical elements. Together, these components give students the chance to shine as performers, composers and critical listeners.

Further study links

- **A-Level Music or Music Technology** – a strong next step for developing advanced performance, composition and analytical skills
- **Level 3 vocational music courses** – including in performance, production or sound engineering
- **Specialist creative apprenticeships** – such as roles in live sound, music production, events support or creative media

Career opportunities

Music performance, sound engineering, composing, music production and more!

Student view

“GCSE Music lets me be creative, grow as a performer and understand music in a deeper way”

Contact:	Mr Burns (sburns@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE PHOTOGRAPHY

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Photography explore a wide range of photographic techniques and creative processes. They learn how to use cameras and digital tools confidently, experiment with composition, lighting and editing, and study the work of influential photographers and artists to inspire their own ideas. Through practical projects and independent investigations, students develop visual storytelling skills and build a personal portfolio that showcases their creativity and technical understanding.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two components** that showcase both their creativity and technical skill. The main element is a **portfolio of coursework**, where students develop ideas, experiment with techniques and present a body of work that reflects their personal style. This is supported by an **externally set assignment**, which includes a preparatory period followed by a supervised final piece. Together, these assessments allow students to demonstrate their ability to explore themes, refine photographic techniques and produce thoughtful, visually engaging outcomes.

Further study links

- **A-Level Photography** – a direct progression for developing advanced creative and technical skills
- **Level 3 vocational courses in creative media or visual arts** – such as photography, digital media or graphic design
- **Creative apprenticeships** – including roles in digital content production, photographic assistance or media marketing

Career opportunities

Photography, graphic design, digital media, advertising, journalism, film production and more!

Student view

“GCSE Photography gives me the freedom to be creative while learning how to capture and edit powerful images”

Contact:	Mrs Field (lfield@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND ETHICS

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Philosophy, Religion and Ethics explore big questions about belief, morality and the world we live in. They study the teachings, practices and traditions of major religions, alongside philosophical ideas about right and wrong, the nature of reality, and how people make ethical decisions**.** Through examining real-world issues such as relationships, justice, human rights and the value of life, students learn to think critically, understand different viewpoints and develop well-reasoned arguments.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two written examination papers**, each testing their ability to explain beliefs, analyse arguments and evaluate different viewpoints. They will answer questions on **religious teachings and practices**, as well as on a range of **ethical and philosophical themes**, such as relationships, justice, human rights and the existence of God. The exams include a mixture of short-answer questions and extended writing, allowing students to demonstrate both their knowledge and their ability to construct clear, well-reasoned arguments.

Further study links

- **A-Level Religious Studies or Philosophy** – a strong next step for developing deeper analytical and evaluative skills.
- **A-Level Sociology, Psychology or Politics** – subjects that build on understanding people, society and ethical decision-making.
- **Level 3 courses in humanities or social sciences** – including pathways that lead toward law, education, social work or community roles.

Career opportunities

Law, education, social work, journalism, politics, counselling and more!

Student view

“GCSE Philosophy, Religion and Ethics helps me understand different beliefs and think more deeply about the big questions in life”

Contact:	Miss Wetherall (ewetherall@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE PRODUCT DESIGN

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Product Design explore how everyday products are created, developed and improved, combining creativity with practical problem-solving. They learn about materials, manufacturing processes, sustainability and design principles, while developing their own ideas through sketching, modelling and making. Students also study the work of innovative designers and companies to understand how products meet user needs. Throughout the course, they apply their knowledge to design and create thoughtful, functional and well-crafted products that showcase both imagination and technical skill.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **two main components** that reflect both their creative thinking and technical understanding. The first is a **Non-Exam Assessment (NEA)**, where students investigate a design brief, develop ideas, create prototypes and produce a final product supported by a design portfolio. The second component is a **written exam**, which tests their knowledge of materials, manufacturing processes, sustainability, design principles and wider industry practices. Together, these assessments allow students to demonstrate their ability to design, make and evaluate high-quality products with purpose and originality.

Further study links

- **A-Level Design & Technology (Product Design)** – a direct route for developing advanced design thinking and technical skills.
- **Level 3 vocational courses in engineering, graphics or creative media** – ideal for students interested in practical, industry-focused design work.
- **Creative or technical apprenticeships** – including pathways in product development, manufacturing, CAD design or engineering support.

Career opportunities

Product design, engineering, architecture, graphic design, interior design, manufacturing, and more!

Student view

“GCSE Product Design lets me bring my ideas to life by designing and making real, functional products”

Contact:	Mrs Shepherd (sshepherd@purbeck.wessex.ac)

GCSE SPANISH

What will I study?

Students taking AQA GCSE Spanish develop the confidence to communicate in real-life situations, exploring topics such as identity and culture, local and global areas of interest, and future study and employment. They build skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, learning how to express opinions, describe experiences and understand authentic Spanish-language materials. Alongside language skills, students gain insights into Spanish-speaking cultures and communities, helping them become more globally aware and effective communicators.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through **four equally weighted exams** that test their ability to communicate confidently and understand the language in real contexts. These cover **listening**, **speaking**, **reading** and **writing**, with tasks ranging from understanding short conversations to producing extended written responses. In the speaking exam, students take part in a role-play**,** a photo-card discussion and a general conversation, while the reading and listening papers include both familiar and authentic Spanish materials. Together, these assessments give students the chance to show how well they can use Spanish in practical, meaningful ways.

Further study links

- **A-Level Spanish** – a direct progression that deepens language skills and cultural understanding
- **A-Level subjects such as French, English Language or English Literature** – complementary courses that strengthen communication and analytical skills
- **Level 3 vocational courses in travel, tourism or business** – useful for students interested in global industries where language skills are valued

Career opportunities

Business, tourism, international relations, education, translation, media and more!

Student view

“GCSE Spanish helps me feel more confident communicating with people from different countries and cultures”

Contact:	Mrs West (lwest@purbeck.wessex.ac)

OCR CAMBRIDGE NATIONAL CERTIFICATE IN SPORT STUDIES

What will I study?

Students taking the OCR Cambridge National Certificate in Sport Studies explore how sport operates both in practice and in the wider world, developing a blend of physical competence and theoretical understanding. They study contemporary issues in sport, leadership and teamwork, and the role of media in shaping sporting culture, alongside practical performance and analysis. Through a mix of classroom learning and applied activities, students gain the knowledge and confidence to understand, participate in and influence sport within their communities.

How will I be assessed?

Students are assessed through a combination of **coursework and practical activities**, alongside **one externally assessed written exam**. Coursework units allow students to demonstrate skills in areas such as **leadership**, **media in sport**, and **practical performance**, where they complete assignments, lead sessions and analyse sporting situations. The written exam focuses on **contemporary issues in sport**, testing students' understanding of participation, values, safety and the wider impact of sport in society. This blend of assessment gives every student the chance to succeed by applying their knowledge in both practical and real-world contexts.

Further study links

- **A-Level Physical Education** – a route that deepens understanding of performance, physiology and the sporting industry
- **Level 3 Cambridge Technicals in Sport** – ideal for students wanting applied, vocational study linked to coaching, fitness or sports development
- **Sports-related apprenticeships** – including pathways in coaching, leisure operations or fitness instruction

Career opportunities

Coaching, fitness instruction, sports development, leisure management, officiating**,** physiotherapy and more!

Student view

"OCR Cambridge National Certificate in Sport Studies helps me build confidence by learning new skills and taking on real leadership roles in sport"

Contact:	Mr Hunt (nhunt@purbeck.wessex.ac)


Kindness
We show compassion towards each other at all times
We speak to each other in a respectful and considerate way
We take care of ourselves, each other, and our environment
Achieving excellence together
Perseverance
We never give up
We remain positive whatever the challenge
We support and encourage others
Aspiration
We have the drive to direct our own lives
We do not place limits on what we can achieve
We contribute to a positive social and learning environment