

Frequently Asked Questions for the GCSE Options Process

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Frequently Asked Questions

In simple terms, what do I have to study in Years 10 and 11?

English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Science (Double or Triple Award), Geography *or* History, the Modern Foreign Language you studied in Year 9, and then two additional optional subjects. You will also study core PE and PSHE, though these are not GCSEs and you will not receive a qualification for them.

Frequently Asked Questions for the GCSE Options Process

Who can I ask for help with selecting options?

If it's about a particular subject, speak to your subject teacher or that subject's Head of Department. If it's about something technical or a question about how the options process works, speak to your form tutor who will pass it on to the correct person. You can find the email addresses of the Heads of Department in the GCSE Curriculum Choices Booklet available on the KS4 GCSE Options page of our website.

What should I not do when thinking about my option choices?

Don't select options because your friends have chosen them, or because they have a specific teacher assigned. Choose them because you want to study them, you are good at them, or they are relevant for your future career plans or interests.

How do I select my options? You will use an online system to select your choices. It is called "SIMS Options".

If my login doesn't work, how do I get help?

Please visit Oak 12 office to speak to Mrs Ebsworth who will be able to help you.

Am I able to opt-out of studying any of the compulsory subjects?

NSG provides a well-balanced package of curriculum choices to help prepare students for a broad range of careers and higher education routes. It is therefore not possible to opt-out of any compulsory subject.

What is the chance that I will get into a certain subject?

We are unable to advise on these questions as it will depend on demand for each subject and educator availability.

If I submit my option choices sooner, will this mean I have a greater chance of getting my preferences?

No - you can submit your choices at any point during the submission window of 1st March to 12th April and it will have no impact on how likely you are to receive the choices.

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What will happen if I miss the deadline?

It is very important that you keep to the deadline in order to have the best chance of receiving the subjects you would like to study. Outside of exceptional circumstances, we cannot guarantee that students will be allocated to their preferences if the deadline is missed.

What do I do if I would like to change my option(s) once the deadline has passed?

Once options have been selected by all students, the process of designing the curriculum to ensure that as many students as possible can study their preferred choices will begin.

The options selection system is open for a month to enable students to carefully consider their choices, discuss them with parents/carers, contact teachers for support and enter the options into the system.

Technical support is available at options@nsg.northants.sch.uk or in person at the Oak 12 office. This includes the ability for staff to enter student options if the student prefers this.

As a result of this, we do not offer the option to change your options once the deadline has passed, except in exceptional circumstances at the school's discretion.

We would not consider allowing options changes for the following reasons:

- If a student has simply changed their mind
- In order to make choices in line with friends
- Because a student left the submission until the last minute
- Because a student claims they did not know what the course would entail (this is because we offer a broad range of information about each option via the KS4 NSG Choices page on the school website and via teaching staff)
- Due to technical difficulties (because the school offers the opportunity to have your options directly entered by contacting options@nsg.northants.sch.uk or speaking to an Options team member at Oak 12 office)

What do I do if I would like to change my option(s) once the subjects have been allocated?

Once options have been allocated, a significant amount of the timetable design for the next academic year has already been completed. Allowing changes of options at that stage might impact not just on the student requesting the change, but on larger parts of the school including other year groups.

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As a result of this, we do not allow changes to options at this stage except in the case of oversubscription as indicated above or in exceptional circumstances at the school's discretion. Please see the previous question for examples of what would not be considered an acceptable reason.

We do not offer changes to options in September or later under any circumstances.

When will I receive my options assignments?

Before the end of the school year.

How are students allocated to subjects once the deadline for submissions has passed?

When students enter their subjects into SIMS Options, students will place them in a priority order. We aim to allocate students to the subject choices in this order. There is no priority given to students who submit their options earlier in the options window, as the option blocks are designed to consider, amongst other factors, the preferences of students. The school does its utmost to allocate students their top two preferences, but this is not always possible due to limitations in class size; however, this is rare.

How are oversubscribed subjects fairly allocated to students?

In the event a subject has more applicants than can be accommodated the school will first allocate students who are in vulnerable groups, such as looked after children, followed by all other students.

Where there are insufficient places to accommodate a particular group, each student in that group will be allocated a number and a computerised random selection program will be used to select which students will be offered a place objectively.

Students who are not offered a place on an oversubscribed course are able to email options@nsg.northants.sch.uk and request to be placed on a waiting list. This will operate on a first-come-first-served basis, meaning the first student to email chronologically will be first in order in that list.

If a place on an oversubscribed course arises the school will refer to the waiting list to allocate places. If they accept, they will need to choose one of their allocated "free choice" options to swap. If they decline, they will be removed from the waiting list and the next student on the list will be offered the place. The waiting list will cease to operate at 2pm on the last day before the school summer holiday begins and no further changes will be permitted.

Frequently Asked Questions for the GCSE Options Process

I don't like the group I am allocated to and wish to be in a group with my friend, as I work better with them.

Unfortunately, due to the range of factors that goes into creating a group mix, we cannot accommodate requests to be in a group with friends, or changing option subjects to enable this.

Is there a “right of appeal” if I don't like the choices I am allocated?

We endeavour to listen to all concerns about GCSE Options, but due to the range of factors that goes into designing our curriculum offer, timetable and the allocation of students to subjects, we may not always be able to offer every student their first choice. However, in most years, we achieve a very high rate of success - in the last academic year, over 99% of students received their first two preferences for their option choices.