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Dear Parents

### ***Sixth Form Option Selections***

As you may be aware, whilst the IB and BTEC systems are remaining as they are currently, the Government has signalled changes to the A Level qualification structure which are to be phased in over the coming years. This letter outlines the School's response to those changes and the options that your child has.

#### ***A Level Changes***

The main changes at A level are as follows:

- Two year courses will be introduced, with a final examination at the end of the second year (the continuous two-year course is being referred to as linearity)
- AS courses will be separate qualifications and will not necessarily be a precursor to the A Level courses that they relate to
- There will be more extended writing and mathematics across all A Level courses
- There is a suggestion that the revised A Level courses will be a little harder, with possibly less coursework being required

#### ***What's Not Changing***

Although the changes are significant and have become the source of much speculation in the media and amongst educational experts, not everything is being revised. The following won't change:

- Courses will still be graded A\* to E
- The subjects on offer remain the same, although a number are being rewritten and updated
- Bromsgrove's own Sixth Form entry criteria will remain the same as in the past (8 B grades, with A grades desirable in A Level or HL subjects, and expected in Maths, the sciences and MFLs)

#### ***Three Courses, Studied Over Two Years***

The main change for our students who choose the A Level route is that they will now only take three courses from the start of the Sixth Form, not four. It has always been the case that Universities only look at the final three A Level grades when making offers. Traditionally, most students have studied four subjects at AS Level and then dropped one to concentrate on the remaining three in their final year. In the past, the subject they dropped at least had the benefit of providing an AS qualification and a pathway into the related A Level course, thus also allowing them to try four subjects before committing to three.

However, now that the AS courses no longer feed automatically into A Level courses, there will be little motivation for students to begin studying a fourth subject. Indeed, it is our view that commencing four at the start of the Sixth Form, knowing that you are going to drop one for no reward, is a waste of time. Our preference is that our students commence their three final courses from day one, thus getting maximum time to attain the best possible marks.

Chairman of Governors: Mr S Towe CBE

### **The Transition**

Unfortunately, the changes imposed by the Government are not all being implemented in a single year. Whilst some of the new A Level courses have already been prepared for the 2015/16 academic year, the rest won't come on-stream until 2017. In the interim therefore:

- English, Business, Economics, Art, the Sciences and History will be working under the new reformed A Level regime and will not sit L6 AS exams
- Other old style subjects will still take AS papers as now
- All subjects in the L6th will gain an extra 6th teaching period
- In addition to Mathematics, Further Mathematicians will take two other A Level subjects next year so that they still benefit from studying three subjects
- BTEC Sports students will take a single other A Level subject
- All other A Level students will be expected to take three subjects as the standard loading.

### **Ensuring Breadth**

The only potential downside of these changes is a reduction in the breadth of the education in the Sixth Form. In order to counter that, we will also be introducing the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) for all Sixth Formers. This course has been run very successfully in the past for limited numbers of our students and is equivalent to the highly-regarded Extended Essay of the IB Diploma. Students select a project topic that may be directly related to their main study programme, but can also look beyond.

The EPQ encourages creativity and curiosity and provides an opportunity for students to extend their abilities beyond the A-level syllabi. Successful Projects see students undertaking deep, original and personalised pieces of original research whilst also pro-actively reflecting and improving their independent work habits. As in the past, we expect our students who undertake an Extended Project in the future to build their university applications around their Project. Competitive universities value both the skills and interests developed by undertaking a project and recognize these in the offers they make applicants.

To further embellish the enrichment programme, extra specialist subject extension groups will still be run to broaden students' horizons beyond the main curriculum.

### **Course Counselling and Advice**

One of the hallmarks of our continued academic success as a School over recent years has been the quality of our course and career counselling. We are confident that this service will continue to allow our students to select the right courses at the start of the Sixth Form. As in the past, there will still be options for changes to be made early in the Sixth Form should circumstances change. We pride ourselves on our ability to tailor courses to meet the individual needs of our students and there is no reason for this bespoke service to change under the new regime.

Yours sincerely



PETER CLAGUE  
Headmaster