

Curriculum changes at Thomas Deacon Academy - Sept 2015

The National Context

Schools across the country are facing significant curriculum change over the next few years and the main developments can be summarised as follows:

- The National Curriculum has changed from Sept 2014 and changes apply to all year groups from Key Stage 1 right through to Key Stage 3 at the same time.
- New GCSE courses are being introduced from September 2015 (English and Maths). This will be a phased introduction starting with core subjects. The first year of examinations will be in 2017.
- For the new GCSEs there will be no modular exams and pupils will be assessed in a single exam at the end of Year 11. Most subjects will be externally assessed by a written examination and there will be no coursework.
- New A Levels are being introduced from 2015.
- The national system of Levels is being removed from September 2014 and school will be required to develop their own methods for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils.

Preparing for change

At Thomas Deacon Academy we have been planning ahead so that both teachers and students are fully prepared for these new challenges. In view of the planned changes to GCSEs we believe our curriculum should help our students prepare for success from Year 7 onwards.

We are re structuring our curriculum to adapt to a 5 year model of key skills progression from Year 7 through to year 11.

In addition students will not start GCSEs until Year 10, when we feel they are well enough prepared to tackle the more challenging content . This will also mean that the content they will need to revise will be spread across two years rather than three.

Under the new arrangement there will be three years in Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9) and two years in key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). Students will choose their GCSE courses in Year 9 and then start in Year 10.

The benefits of starting GCSE in Year 10

The benefits of making this change can be summarised as follows:

1. Students have more time to develop the key skills before beginning a GCSE course
2. Students will be more mature and will have better understanding of option subjects before they make these very important decisions
3. Subjects will have had more time to adapt to and prepare for the new GCSE specifications rather than begin courses before the full details are available.

Adapting the curriculum to meet student needs

We believe that all our students can and should achieve their aspirational targets and that our curriculum should be structured to support this achievement. To help us achieve this we are reorganising the curriculum into four pathways and adapting the curriculum offer of each of these four pathways.

This will allow students to spend more time on key skills of literacy and numeracy, if they need it and for all students to be taught at a pace and approach that is right for them.

The four pathways

All students will follow one of the four pathways and experience a curriculum model that suits their needs. Each pathway is designed to ensure students are able to meet their aspirational targets and all four pathways lead to high value level 2 qualifications with the majority leading to GCSEs.

Students will be placed on a pathway based on their KS2 data and their progress carefully monitored to ensure that students are following the correct curriculum. Students will be able to move between pathways if their progress data suggests they should follow a different model.

Pathway name	Key features	Possible KS4 courses
Support	Students will follow primary model, taught majority of lessons by a core team	Take Foundation Learning level 2 plus 2 or 3 other level 2 courses including GCSEs
Booster	Increased time in English and Maths A Literacy programme will drive this curriculum	Take 1 of : History/Geography, French/ Spanish/ Germans/ Computer Science/ Triple Science Plus 2 others
Secondary ready	Teaching and promoting the skills required for independent learning Developing extended writing skills	To take 1 of: History/Geography, French/ Spanish/ Germans/ Computer Science/ Triple Science Plus 3 others
Express	Focus on academic challenge – promoting autonomy and intellectual curiosity	Take: 1 Humanities 1 MfL Plus 2 others

Finally

It is important that you contact us if you have any concerns or if you need any extra information at any time. More information regarding the curriculum model for September 2015 can be found on the parent portal site. Equally questions or concerns can be directed to your son or daughter's College Leader.