



THORNS
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Option Choices 2023

A guide for families



SHIRELAND
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY TRUST

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Introduction

This document is designed to guide you through the process of helping your child to choose their options for Years 10 and 11. You will find information to prepare for the Options Evening and details about the options blocks available. Subject specific content is provided on the academy website: www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/.

The Options Timeline

You have recently received documentation that outlines the key stages within the options process which started February 2023, these are identified below:

Wednesday 15th February 2023 – All students attended a school assembly in Session 1, during which the options process and timeline was shared with them.

Week beginning Monday 27th February 2023 – A variety of subject leaders have presented their Key Stage 4 qualifications to students. These presentations will have covered subjects that are less well known to our students, such as Health and Social Care, Business Studies, Computer Science, Creative Digital Media as well as clarifying the difference between Combined and Triple Science.

Week beginning Monday 6th March 2023 – All Year 9 students and parents will receive this options booklet which identifies the options that students must select from and further information regarding the Parent Consultation Evening.

Wednesday 22nd March 2023 – All parents should attend the Parent Consultation Meeting with their child. This will take the format of a face-to-face appointment in the academy with a senior member of staff during which your child's option choices for Key Stage 4 will be discussed and chosen.

You will be allocated a 15 minute appointment slot between 4 and 7pm prior to the evening. If the appointment you are given is not suitable then please telephone or email the academy (01384 987973 or info@tca.shirelandcat.net) to request a different time slot. This appointment time will be shared via a letter sent to you electronically through EduLink. We trust that you will support your child by making every effort to attend on that evening so that you can access all of the advice on offer, but if it is not possible for you to attend on that evening, then please contact the academy.

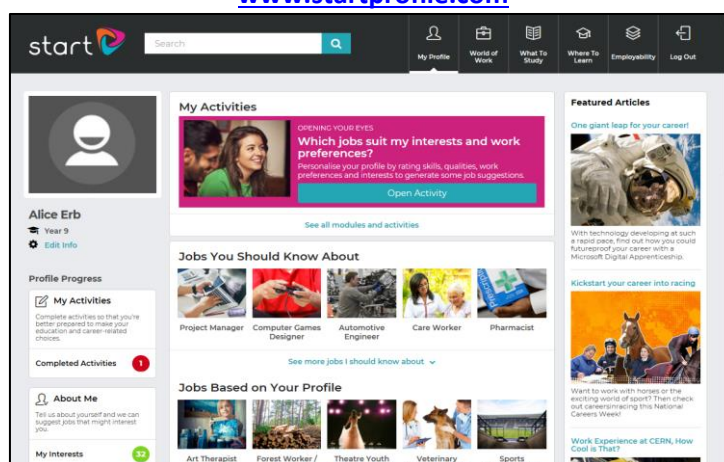
Options Evening

Before the Options Evening

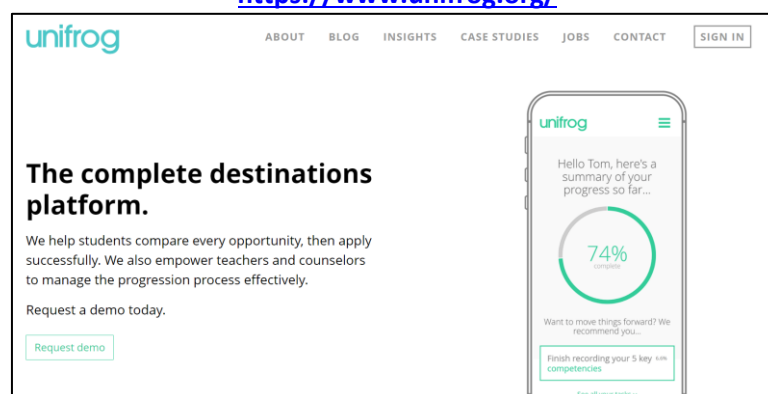
It is important that your child accesses as much information about the courses available to them at the Academy by speaking to teaching staff, family and older friends who have accessed similar courses during Key Stage 4. They can also use the resources that are readily available to them to support their decisions. We have already started this process by allowing our Heads of Department to address the Year 9 students during the options assemblies. However, if your son/daughter still has unanswered questions then please ask them to speak to/email the subject teacher(s) to seek further information.

Your child has access to two online platforms for support with potential careers, these have been referred to during the Year 9 choices assemblies and recent careers sessions. The two platforms are Start Profile and Unifrog, please discuss these with your child. We encourage you to ask them to log on to show you what they have been doing and discuss with them their career ideas.

www.startprofile.com



<https://www.unifrog.org/>



Families are also encouraged to visit the Thorns subject choices website. Each subject lead has produced a video introducing the course(s) they have on offer, as well as providing detailed information explaining what is involved. Please use the following link:

www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/



Options Evening Wednesday 22nd March

There will be 2 parts to the evening:

1. **Choice interview with a senior member of staff** - The purpose of the interview is to guide you and your child through the choices which need to be made, considering the skills and attributes of your child, as well as their career plans. We expect the interviewer will be able to answer most questions you might have. You will be guided through a Microsoft Form as a way of keeping a record of the conversation taking place. During this meeting your child will make their subject choices. We advise you bring along a copy of your child's recent assessment data which was distributed week beginning 13th February.
2. **Subject and Careers Marketplace** - There will be subject teachers on hand to offer specific information about our examination courses should you wish to discuss your child's progress or suitability for a specific course. This information is also available on the Thorns choices website (www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/). In addition, Mrs Mackay, the member of staff responsible for our Careers provision at Thorns is also available should you wish for any additional guidance. There is no need to book for these appointments.

After Options Evening

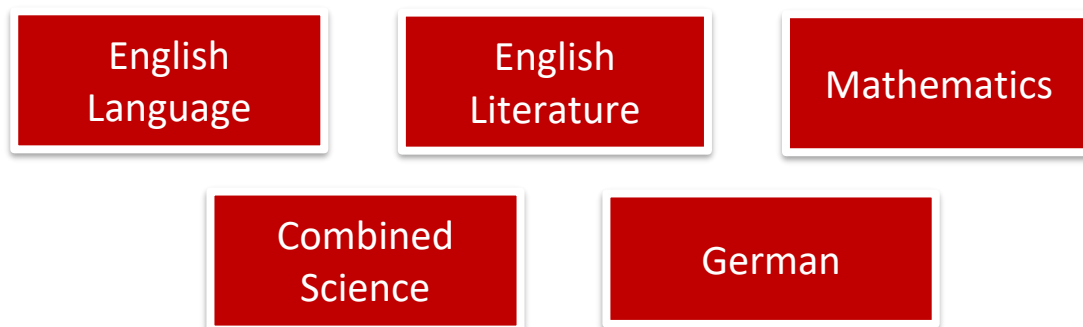
Your child's choices will have been made on **Wednesday 22nd March** however we acknowledge that some students may have a change of heart after a period of reflection. With this in mind, we will enable students to adjust subject choices in the following days up until **Friday 31st March**. If you would like to propose a change to your child's choices then please contact me, Mr Fletcher, at the Academy via email (sfletcher@tca.shirelandcat.net).

On rare occasions a student may wish to change their option at the start of Year 10. If this scenario arises with your child then a change **may be** considered **within the first 3 weeks of the new timetable**, we will therefore will only consider a change up to and including **Friday 22nd September**. I must state at this time, there needs to be an **extenuating circumstance** for a proposed change to be considered, for example a student awaits an operation which

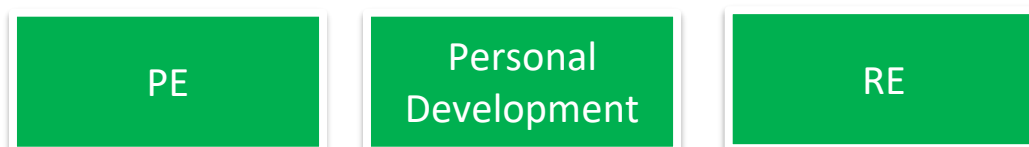
will keep them out of practical activities for 6 months preventing them from accessing all of their Dance option. **Unfortunately, any changes after this date will not be possible.**

The KS4 Curriculum, Compulsory Studies

The following qualifications are compulsory, all students will take them as part of their KS4 curriculum.



Regardless of the option subjects chosen, all students should gain six GCSE grades purely from the core offering above. It is our aim for all students to study nine GCSE or equivalent qualifications in total. Students are set by ability in English, Mathematics and Science.



As part of the core offering, students will also have one hour per week of non-examined Physical Education, and periods of Personal Development and RE. Core lessons will take up the majority of teaching hours within the week. PE lessons will be taught in mixed ability groups, as will Personal Development and RE which are delivered during session one.

The KS4 Curriculum, Optional Qualifications

Your child must select three further qualifications, which will make up the remaining hours of their weekly timetable. Subjects on offer to students include:

GEOGRAPHY	COMPUTER SCIENCE (Students must have a target grade of 6 or above in Mathematics)	PRODUCT DESIGN (DT)
HISTORY	TRIPLE SCIENCE (Students must have a target grade of 6 or above)	3D DESIGN (cannot be selected with Fine Art)
BUSINESS STUDIES	GCSE PE	TEXTILES DESIGN (cannot be selected with Fine Art)
FINE ART (cannot be selected with textiles or 3D design)	MUSIC	Digital Media (ICT)
DRAMA	DANCE	HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Subjects in yellow are GCSEs, blue subjects are BTECs.

English Baccalaureate or EBacc

You might have heard of the EBacc (English Baccalaureate) but are unsure of which subjects are included and the benefits of completing the EBacc. The EBacc is not a qualification in its own right but rather a combination of GCSE subjects. The EBacc was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2010 to encourage students to study a broad range of core subjects and to help them go on to study higher education courses as well as increasing the likelihood that a pupil will stay on in full-time education.

The Subjects included in the EBacc are:

- English Language and literature
- Maths
- Science
- A Language
- History or Geography

The government has outlined a target for schools, 75% of all students should follow the EBacc this academic year, this rises to 90% in 2025, this is something that we as an Academy and Trust are working towards.

Students who have this option booklet will be following the English Baccalaureate.

How to select appropriate option subjects

Experience shows that when students play to their strengths, they succeed. Because of this, some subjects have entry requirements. Students may be restricted from some subjects which require a specific skill level if they have not demonstrated an aptitude for those subjects over the past three years. Examples of these subjects are: Physical Education, Music, Drama, Dance and Art. If your child is considering one of these subjects and are unsure if they meet the requirements, please encourage your child to speak to their teachers within these subjects prior to your interview. Furthermore, you can meet representatives from these subjects in the marketplace on the Parent Consultation Evening for further clarity.

Some students with lower target grades may be asked to consider specific vocational programmes which will allow them the best chance to be successful. Further discussions have taken place with Heads of Department, the Special Educational Needs department and senior staff to determine if guidance is necessary.

It is important for students and families to be aware that on occasions, the options an individual decides to follow may require them to switch year halves in Key Stage 4. This often occurs within subjects like Triple Science, 3D Design and Textiles where it is necessary for all students to be on one half year group to make the option viable.

Targets

The Department for Education have created a measure called Progress 8, to judge schools and students based on your attainment level when you start at the Academy.

We use this measure to develop a challenging target grade for all students. It should be noted that this is not your destiny, targets can be raised. It will take dedication and hard work to reach your target and how hard you study will be the determining factor at GCSE.

In the recent assessment information distributed to family's week beginning 13th February, you will see your son/daughters target grade and current achievement levels. These are based on government predictions and whether staff think that you are performing in a way which is above, below or at this standard. For academic subjects, these targets are based on the 9-1 methodology which has replaced the old A*-G grading system in the last few years. Please seek guidance from staff if you would like the 9-1 system to be explained to you. You have also been assessed on your progress against competencies in Literacy for Life.

Departments will have different ways of determining if students are currently on track to achieve these grades, based on test data, classwork, end of year examinations and staff professional judgement. This assessment information is an excellent way to identify the strengths of any student and should be reflected upon during the options process.

Future Career

It is important for your child to think carefully about the career field that they are considering entering when they are older. Questions you might ask your child are:

- Which careers are you interested in? Are there any qualifications at GCSE/A level/Degree level that you need to enter this profession?
- If you had to choose three A-Level qualifications to study tomorrow, what would they be? Which careers do these subjects lead towards?
- Are the A-Level qualifications available to study in Key Stage 4? If they are, then it may well be worth considering them as your options.
- Consider carefully what you are talented in. What is your best subject? What does your school report say? Often the subject that you are best at is the one that you will enjoy the most.

There are several subjects available that students have not studied before. If your child is considering one of those subjects, then ensure they are aware of the requirements of the course and the career path this course can lead to.

Encourage them to talk to the subject leader before choosing these courses, perhaps also advise them to talk to Year 10 or 11 students who are currently doing the course.

Final Key Tips for Students

DOS:

- **DO READ** the information about the subjects on offer - www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/
- **DO ASK** subject teachers or Mr Guest/Mrs Trehan (Head of Year 10&11) if there is anything you are not sure about, or if you would like more information
- **DO THINK** about all the subjects open to you
- **DO THINK** carefully about your future, consider your education and career path
- **DO TALK** about your ideas and choices with your family, friends, teachers
- **DO MAKE SURE** that you meet the entry requirements for your chosen subjects, if in doubt speak to the relevant Head of Department

DON'TS:

- **DON'T CHOOSE** a subject simply because your friends are choosing it; their needs may be totally different from yours and you may not be in the same teaching group anyway
- **DON'T CHOOSE** a subject just because you like the teacher; you may have a different teacher next year
- **DON'T CHOOSE** a subject just because it is new or because it sounds intriguing; check it out carefully!

Options Blocks 2023

The table below lists all the options available. You will be expected to choose **one** subject from each option block. Please remember that some subjects have entry requirements and if you do not meet these you will need to make an alternative choice. These choices will need to be selected during the Parent Consultation Evening on Wednesday 22nd March.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Block 4
Product Design (DT)	Fine Art (Cannot be selected with Textiles Design or 3D Design)	History	World Language (German)
Textiles Design (Cannot be selected with fine Art)	Business Studies	Geography	
3D Design (Cannot be selected with fine Art)	Health & Social Care		
Dance	GCSE PE		
Drama	Digital Media (ICT)		
Computer Science (Grade 6 target for entry)	Music		
	Triple Science		

Although we will make every effort to ensure that all courses listed above run, if there is very low demand for a specific course then the course may not be able to take place and students will be contacted as soon as possible.