



THORNS
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Green Pathway Option Choices 2025

A guide for families



SHIRELAND
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY TRUST

Contents Page

Front Cover.....	1
Contents Page	2
Introduction.....	3
Options Pathways.....	3
The Options Timeline.....	3
Options Evening, before the event.....	4
Options Evening, Tuesday 25 th March.....	4
After Options Evening.....	5
The KS4 Curriculum, Compulsory Studies.....	5
The KS4 Curriculum, Optional Qualifications.....	5
English Baccalaureate or EBacc.....	6
How to select appropriate options subjects.....	6
Final key tips for students.....	7
Option Blocks 2024.....	8

Introduction

This document is designed to guide you through the process of helping your child to choose their curriculum options for Key Stage 4. This includes information to help you prepare for the Options Evening; and details about the subjects available. Subject specific content is provided on the academy website and can be found here www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/.

Options Pathways

There are two distinct pathways - green and blue - available for the 2025 options process. Students are thoughtfully guided into a pathway based on their target grades, current attainment and individual learning requirements to optimise their progress. No matter which pathway a student is signposted to, all students have access to the same diverse range of subjects.

The Options Timeline

You have recently received documentation that outlines the stages within the options process which started February 2025. These are identified below:

Wednesday 26 February 2025 – All students attended an assembly during which the options process and timeline were shared with them.

Week beginning Monday 3 March 2025 – A variety of subject leaders presented their Key Stage 4 qualifications to students. These presentations included 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 10 March 2025 – All Year 9 families will receive this options booklet which identifies the curriculum choices that students must select from along with further information regarding the Parent Consultation Evening.

Thursday 13 March 2025 – Year 9 parents evening; an opportunity for families to speak to subject teachers about their child's current attainment and suitability for Key Stage 4 courses.

Tuesday 25 March 2025 – The Options Evening will encompass a parent consultation meeting and a marketplace event. Families will be invited to attend a face-to-face meeting with a senior member of staff, during which your child's option choices for Key Stage 4 will be discussed and chosen. The marketplace event will allow families to meet with subject representatives who can answer any questions they may have before their child makes their final choices.

You will be allocated a 15 minute appointment slot between 3.45 and 6.30pm prior to the Options 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. **You will be able to see this appointment slot in the Guardian Consultation section on the Arbor App.**

Options Evening

Before Options Evening

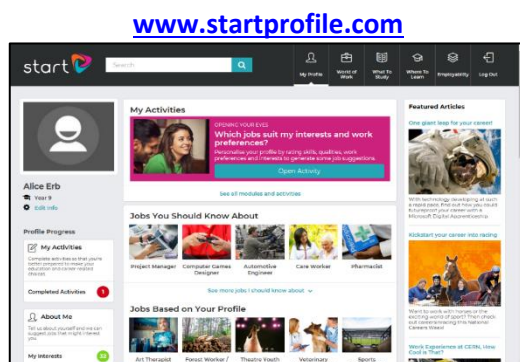
Below are some suggested questions you may like to ask your child before attending the event:

- Is there any particular career field you are interested in?
- What are your strengths? What subject(s) are you making the most progress in?
- Which subject(s) do you enjoy the most?
- What kind of training, employment or education are you considering post-16 e.g. studying A Levels, full-time vocational education at college, an apprenticeship?

There are several subjects available that students have not studied before. If your child is considering one of those subjects please ensure they are aware of the requirements of the course. 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.

Students should also use the resources that are readily available to them to support their decisions. We have already started this process by offering our Heads of Department the opportunity to address the Year 9 students during the options assemblies. However, if your child still has unanswered questions then please ask them to speak to or email the subject teacher(s) to seek further information.

Your child can access an online platform for support with potential careers called startprofile. This is free to access and set up an account. This is often a good place to start when considering future career opportunities.



Families are encouraged to visit the Thorns subject choices website. Each Head of Department has produced a video introducing the course on offer, as well as providing detailed information explaining what is involved. Please use the following link: www.thornscs.org.uk/year-9-choices/.

Options Evening - Tuesday 25th March

There will be 2 parts to the evening:

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. 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 report which has been distributed week beginning 24 February for reference.

Subject Marketplace - There will be subject teachers on hand to offer information about our Key Stage 4 courses should you wish to discuss your child's suitability for a specific course; this will take place in the Sports Hall. This information is also available on the Thorns choices website (www.thornscs.org.uk/year-9-choices/). There is no need to book appointments for the marketplace event.

After Options Evening

Your child's choices will have been made on **Tuesday 25 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 up to and including **Friday 28 March**. If you would like to propose a change to your child's choices please contact Mr Fletcher at the academy using the email address 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 only consider a change up to and including **Friday 19 September 2025**. 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 qualification. **Changes to subject choices will not be made after Friday 19 September**.

The Key Stage 4 Curriculum – compulsory qualifications

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

- GCSE English Language
- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE Mathematics (Foundation or Higher tier)
- GCSE Combined Science (Foundation or Higher tier) – this accounts for two GCSE qualifications, if students choose the triple science option then they will gain three GCSE qualifications instead

Regardless of the option subjects chosen, all students should gain five GCSE grades purely from the core offering above. It is our aim that all students will study a total of eight GCSE or equivalent qualifications. Students are set by ability in English, mathematics and science.

As part of the core offering students will also have non-examined physical education, personal development and religious education lessons, taught in mixed ability groups. Core lessons will take up the majority of teaching hours within the week.

The Key Stage 4 Curriculum - Optional qualifications

Your child must select **three** further qualifications which will make up the remaining hours of their weekly timetable. The subjects on offer to students are:

- History
- Geography
- French
- German
- Triple Science (Students must have a target grade of 6 or higher)
- Computer Science (Students must have a target grade of 6 or higher)
- Business Studies
- Product Design (DT)
- Fine Art (Cannot be selected with Textiles Design)
- Textiles Design (Cannot be selected with Fine Art)
- GCSE Physical Education
- Drama
- Music
- Dance
- Health & Social Care
- Digital Media (ICT)

Subjects in green and yellow are GCSE qualifications, blue subjects are BTEC qualifications

Options Expectations:

- You must select at least 1 **green** subject
- You must select 3 different subjects
- You are only able to select a maximum of 1 **blue** BTEC qualification

English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

You might have heard of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) 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 student will stay on in full-time education.

The Subjects included in the EBacc are:

- English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- A Language
- History or Geography

Should a student wish to follow the EBacc route and gain this qualification they should select History or Geography, French or German plus one other subject during the options process.

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 studying subjects which require a specific skill if they have not demonstrated an aptitude for those subjects over the past three years, examples of these subjects are GCSE 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 subject teacher prior to your interview. Furthermore, you can meet representatives from these subjects at the marketplace during Options Evening.

Some students with lower target grades may be asked to consider specific vocational programmes which we feel will maximise their opportunities for success. Further discussions have taken place with Heads of Department, the Inclusion department and senior staff to determine what guidance is necessary for each individual student.

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 due to subjects like Triple Science 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 child's destiny, targets can be raised. It will take dedication and hard work for your child to reach their target and how hard they study will be the determining factor at Key Stage 4.

In the recent pupil reports distributed to families during the week beginning 24 February you will see your child's target grade and current achievement levels. These indicate whether staff think that the student is performing in a way which is above, below or at the attainment level needed to achieve their target grade at the end of Key Stage 4. Departments will have different ways of determining if students are currently on track to achieve these target grades and this will be 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.

Final Key Tips for Students

DO:

- Read information about the subjects
- Ask teachers if you have questions
- Think about your future career
- Talk to family and friends about your choices
- Make sure you meet the entry requirements

DON'T:

- Choose a subject just because your friends are choosing it
- Choose a subject just because you like the teacher
- Choose a subject without checking it out carefully

Options Blocks 2025

The table below lists all the options available. You will be expected to choose **one** subject from each 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 Tuesday 25 March.

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

Subjects in green and yellow are GCSE qualifications, blue subjects are BTEC qualifications

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 take place. We will always endeavour to ensure students are able to follow their first-choice options, if this is not possible students will be contacted as soon as possible.