

Subject Guide:

A Level English Language

Change to all A Levels

Changes are under way for all A levels in all schools and colleges and some awarding bodies are still revising their syllabuses for 2015. As a result, this guide is an illustration of the content but the exact details may change.

The most significant changes in A Levels and AS exams (but see below for the different timescale in this subject) are:

- All assessment for A Levels will be through end of course exams with no practical element in most subjects.
- There will still be AS as one year “half A Levels” but you won’t be able to add an A2 to make them into a full A Level.
- This means if you want a full A Level you will need to decide that at the start of your course.
- You will still be able to combine A Levels with other types of qualifications such as BTECs.
- These changes are happening at different times for different subjects.
- You’ll have lots of support from us before you have to make your final choice of subjects.

Specifics for this subject:

The first teaching for the new examinations is in September 2015 leading to an end of course exam in 2017.



What is English Language?

English Language explores the structure of our language system, including the difference between spoken, written and multimodal language and the relevance of context to different linguistic forms. It also explores the way in which the language has evolved and the factors that influence this.

There is a clear link from GCSE English through the exploration of texts and the application of linguistic terminology to the analysis of language patterns.

By providing these research tools, English Language equips students to conduct their own exploration of the linguistic texts and extracts they encounter. These can include largely oral forms such as phone conversations, informal text formats and formal publications such as technical manuals, advertising and literature.

At the heart of the subject are pronunciation, writing, grammar and meaning and students develop transferable skills in aspects such as textual analysis, reasoning and abstract thinking.

What GCSEs do I need to study English Language?

We would expect you to have performed strongly in English GCSE either in English Language or in linguistic aspects of English Literature/Language & Literature. You’ll be comfortable reading and analysing texts from a wide range of contexts and understanding style and composition. Success in foreign languages at GCSE may also indicate good analytical ability. You can tailor your A Level study towards research in a particular aspect that interests you, e.g. technical English, Scientific English or the language of management and motivation. As a result, English Language can be a good accompaniment for a number of the specialist subjects we will offer.



What could I do with it afterwards?

English Language is a very useful subject as entry to either a career in linguistics or to support occupations such as journalism, technical writing, screen/scriptwriting, research, business, marketing copywriting, teaching, child development, editing, media work, law, librarianship or a wide range of civil service careers.



What form does the assessment take?

Written papers on exploring language (textual analysis applying analytic tools) and linguistic variation (exploring changes in language over time or between contexts). There is also a coursework element, worth 20% of the marks, in which you pursue an independent investigation of your own choosing. This can be linked to your intended career path.

Course details

Linguistic analysis of authentic texts

- Exploring texts as communication systems and developing an understanding of their grammars, context and syntactic form.
- Understanding of implicit and explicit meaning.
- The field of discourse and relationships implied by a text.
- Analysis of terminology, coherence and accuracy of real world texts.

Original writing for a real-world purpose

- The study of real world texts and topical language issues (for example the language of new technology and its impact on non-technological texts).
- Understanding of the concepts and issues relevant to effective and appropriate language use.

Language acquisition

- How children acquire language.
- The construction of meaning.
- The impact of trauma or ageing on language recognition and retrieval.

Language in the media

- Language variation and grammar within a range of media.
- Media language evolution and development.
- Explicit and implicit meaning.

How language changes over time

- Historical development of English.
- Evolution of language and catalysts for change.
- Understanding of current dynamics and extrapolation to future patterns.
- Establishing and analysing connections between textual examples over time.