Guidance about course selections for students who are aspiring to apply for Oxford and Cambridge

Selecting appropriate courses to study at Level 3 (A level) is key for those students who are aspiring to continue their Higher Education at either Oxford or Cambridge (Oxbridge). Making the wrong course choices at A level can have a knock on effect and make your progression into HE at Oxbridge more difficult.

We have put this guidance together to clarify how students can make A level course choices which will support future plans.

Because Farnborough is a large college and we allow students to study any combination of subjects, Oxbridge Admissions Tutors will expect our students to study optimal course combinations and to challenge themselves. Subjects that might be considered 'ideal but not essential' for applicants studying at smaller or more restricted schools/colleges become essential for students studying here.

Oxbridge Admissions - Further Maths

Further maths A level is key in terms of applications to Oxbridge. Admissions Tutors know that Farnborough has one of the biggest, best further maths departments in the country. Students therefore have no excuse for not picking further maths - or other challenging subjects - if they come here. Studying further maths A level would therefore be recommended for all students targeting:

- Any STEM courses
- Medicine and
- Economics based courses.

Summary of recommended course choices

Oxbridge update their specific application criteria for courses annually, so it is always advisable to check their subject pages for the specific information.
Here at Farnborough, we would recommend the following A level course combinations for progression into HE at Oxbridge:

For STEM courses:
Students should be studying:

- maths
- further maths and
- two of biology, chemistry or physics.

For Medicine:
Students should be studying:

- chemistry
- maths
- further maths (at least to AS) and
- one of biology/physics

* many non-Oxbridge medical schools will expect biology as well as chemistry, so it is a safer option than physics, but there are medical schools that do not require biology.

For Biology (Oxford):
Students should be studying:

- biology
- chemistry and
- maths

* further maths is not essential, but would be helpful.

For Computer Science:
Students should be studying:

- maths
- further maths
- physics and
- chemistry (for Cambridge) or
- chemistry/computer science (for Oxford)

For Experimental Psychology (Oxford):
Students should be studying:

- maths and
- two sciences (select from biology/chemistry/physics) or
- one science plus psychology.

* psychology is not essential.

For Psychological and Behavioural Sciences (Cambridge):
Students should be studying:

- maths
- biology and
- one of chemistry/physics/psychology.

* *psychology is not essential.*

For Humanities Subjects:

Students should build a programme from either:

- 3 subjects in column A
- 2 subjects in column A and one from column B

Further maths can then be added as a fourth subject if maths has been selected. Further maths will be essential for an economics-based course and is highly recommended for all courses if maths is one of the A level choices because it demonstrates a willingness to further learning.

Column A (pick 2 minimum)	**Column B (pick 1 maximum)**
English literature or English language and literature	economics
French/German/Spanish	French/German/Spanish
history	geography
maths (essential for economics-based courses including PPE)	law
philosophy	music
politics	science (biology/chemistry/physics)

As well as following the general advice in the table, there are additional guidelines for some humanities subjects.

For Economics/PPE:
Maths and further maths (at least to AS) are essential.

For Law:
At least one essay-based subject is essential. Maths is strongly recommended.
Law A-level is not required.

For Geography:
Geography A level is generally recommended. If students don't study geography they will need to be careful about their college choice.

Creative arts

For Music:
Students should be studying:

- music A level and
- 2 more A levels

* and demonstrate a strong performance ability

For Fine Art:
Students should be studying:

- Fine Art A level and
- 2 more A levels

* and demonstrate a strong portfolio