

Economics & Business Department Curriculum Statement



Intent

Our department's aim is for our students to achieve academic excellence in our subjects, so that they are able to continue their studies in Higher Education or to commence employment as school leavers. The courses for both subjects are essay based and they encourage important analytical, evaluative and computational skills that should equip our students well for the future. Given the applied nature of our subjects, the parlous state of our economy, the higher profile of entrepreneurship in our society and the practical nature of our students and their parents, keying into the working world is particularly important to us. Many students choose our subjects because they are interested in understanding the commercial world and also because they believe, with some reason, that they might be of more help to them in gaining employment at the end of their studies. With this in mind, we supplement our teaching with a good range of extracurricular/supra-curricular activities. The curricula we offer not only underpins the IB learner, but that of the schools values of Intellect, Empathy and Courage.

Implementation

a) Content & Skills

Students join our KS4 course having no formal prior knowledge of the course content. Most students believe that the course might be useful in the future and, at the least, might be different from the subjects in their earlier years. We attract a diverse range of students, a student profile that we tend to keep into KS5.

In terms of content, both KS4 courses use standard building blocks. In Economics this comprises: Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, International Trade and Global Economics. In Business Studies: Marketing, Finance, Operations and Human Resources. Students are taught and need to demonstrate the skills of Knowledge, Application, Analysis and Evaluation as well as computational skills in preparation for the more technical handling of some of the topics in KS5 and beyond.

In KS4 Business Studies the order of the course is largely determined by the recommendations of the exam board. Operations is placed after Human Resources to allow for HR to be studied straight after external influences - as this is often where they have the greatest effect. This also means that mock examinations can explore and test understanding of the relationship between HR and the external environment. In KS5 the order of the course is determined by the Internal Assessment and student preference, with Marketing being placed first, which is often successful in securing interest and engagement in the subject. At Higher Level the course opens with the more difficult computational tasks which underpin a lot of the analysis that is needed through the course. It also serves to demonstrate the more difficult aspects of the course early on so students are able to make an informed choice about their future in the subject. The new IB syllabus (examination from 2024 onwards) separates some topics into the 'Business Management Toolkit' to give emphasis on how these are used. In the lesson, we provide emphasis on the toolkit but introduce the topics as and when relevant to the current area of study.

In KS4 Economics the order of the course follows that which is suggested by the exam board in relation to the J205 specification. In KS5 the department would typically follow the order that the book and specification follows. The Micro and Macro topics are generally taken by different teachers to enable the learning of both, in particular complimentary topics, at the same time without becoming disorderly.

Transition from KS4 to KS5

Our department tends to have a high retention rate of students transitioning from KS4 to KS5 but it is not essential to have studied our subjects in KS4 to study them in KS5.

The content of the IB courses for both subjects tends to reflect the basic structures from KS4, albeit in greater detail and at a higher technical proficiency. The emphasis remains as essay-based subjects but in both courses there is a higher degree of computational work, especially as, for example, the Finance and Operational components of the Business Management course and the Linear Demand and Supply Functions of the Economics course demand it. Whilst the skills set of Knowledge, Application, Analysis and Evaluation are still important in the IB courses, they are less overt in comparison to their treatment by the UK exam boards.

The requirements of the Extended Essay in our topics means that students are encouraged to read and research the topic to a much greater extent. All our students now have to engage in detailed academic review and referencing and we aim to improve this skill by providing access to research libraries and improving technique. In response to this, we have also worked closely with the school librarian to source books that are entertaining and/or of merit in order to encourage students to 'read around the subject' and underpin their coursework. We have also invested in a range of books to keep in classrooms, particularly in the 'Knowledge Corners' where students are encouraged to

borrow them and report back with a review. Evidence of these reviews can be found by students when looking to borrow a book.

The Department actively arranges the following extracurricular/supra-curricular activities which can be found on the BGS Opportunities page.

The Department actively supports our Careers Advisor during Power Days aimed at the non-uni cohort. We also support Sixth Formers in their Job Applications, internships, and interviews.

b) Learning environment

In KS4, average class sizes are around 28 students. There are no selection criteria to join these courses, classes are not streamed.

In KS5, class sizes can be up to 32 students - we are very popular subjects with the sixth form.

Most lessons are taught in a suite of 3 rooms in the M block. Each room is equipped with the resources necessary to facilitate learning including. For example, mini libraries, class sets of textbooks and the resources necessary for learning activities such as mini whiteboards and coloured pens for two way communication with assessment (dialogue marking).

Students can expect to have variety to their lessons as we explore each of the four key skills necessary in both KS4 and KS5: Knowledge, Application, Analysis and Evaluation. Students are likely to engage in plenty of discussion as the subjects lend themselves to developing interest in the wider world. There is a heavy use of case studies to be able to apply the theory we have learned to real life situations. Students might participate in group work, individual note taking, teacher led activities, learning games, self and peer assessment, writing practice and studying documentaries/videos to name but a few techniques seen in our classrooms.

c) Assessment & Feedback

Students in KS4 are given progress trackers to put into the inside cover of their exercise books, which are updated with grades and targets based on areas for improvement, specifically referring to the four key skills (KAAAnE). This allows them to reflect after homework, topic tests, subject tests, and end of year examinations and establish what they need to do to improve their work. Marking often uses 'dialogue marking' and students are usually asked to comment and respond to the teachers marking using purple pens at the beginning of the lesson. Good work is usually modelled on the IWB using a visualiser, so that students can see and discuss where marks can be gained or lost.

A similar system is used in KS5 where students' work is assessed, students and teachers engage in dialogue marking, targets are set where students need to focus their efforts and everything is documented in a coloured folder with an assessment front sheet. Students are encouraged to identify their weak areas in order to rectify them.

Students can expect to be assessed throughout lessons by way of Q&A and teachers checking their written work. At various points through the course they may have mini tests in the form of digital multiple choice tests which are designed to purely test knowledge, as well as more in depth assessments of their writing skills. At the end of each topic an end of topic test will take place which is timed and in exam conditions. The results of these, along with other activities in class and the mock examinations allow teachers and students to establish the learning that has taken place, key areas for improvement and likely achievements in the final examinations.

d) Monitoring

Each teacher has a digital mark book for every class and records scores of assessments as the course progresses.

The marks for each end of topic test will be recorded in a teacher's markbook but also in a shared markbook which seeks to compare and review where issues or outstanding achievements might present themselves. These grades can then be discussed in department meetings.

Work scrutiny is used to check that every child is using the self assessment system and setting themselves realistic targets. It can also be used to demonstrate good practice among teaching staff who are getting students particularly engaged in dialogue marking, for example.

Report data is based on teachers' mark books and mock examination results. The HoD can use this data to discuss with teachers the students who may benefit from extra help. The department runs workshops during lunchtimes for Year 11 students where they can get help from trained Year 13 students.

Parents are informed about any causes for concern, as well as the pastoral team responsible for that student.

Impact

Department members often carry out learning walks to observe their peers as the set up of the classrooms allows for this on a daily basis - mostly informally.

Strategies for personalised learning are detailed in context sheets. Lesson observations, learning walks, and analysis of data are used by teachers and HoD to see disparity

between teaching groups and those students with SEND, or disadvantaged within these groups. Strategies are discussed amongst the subject teachers to share good practice, in order to support the students.