

(I) GCSE Options Booklet



Durham School Dubai
Confidence for Life

Contents

	Page
Introduction	2
What is an (I)GCSE?	3
Key Stage 4 Curriculum	4
Core Subjects	5
Additional Options	6
Option Subjects	7-15
Choosing the Right Options	16



Introduction

Choosing (I)GCSE subjects is an important and exciting step for students as they take greater control of their learning and begin shaping their future. Whether you are a current or prospective student or parent, this booklet is designed to guide you through the (I)GCSE options process and provide all the information needed to make confident, informed decisions.

At Durham, we offer a dynamic and supportive learning environment where students can explore their interests, build essential skills, and prepare for future success. Our (I)GCSE programme provides a strong academic foundation, enabling students to progress to A Levels within the school and, ultimately, to university studies both internationally and within the UAE.

This booklet includes key information about the structure of the (I)GCSE curriculum, advice on how to select subjects wisely, and detailed descriptions of the courses available. It also offers guidance to help students align their choices with their aspirations and long-term goals.

It is vitally important to choose subjects for the right reasons. Success is dependent on engagement, hard work, and a genuine passion for the subject. To support students, dedicated staff members are available to provide tailored guidance and answer any questions about the courses on offer.

We also encourage students to have open conversations with parents about their choices. We are excited to welcome you to this next phase of education at Durham, where our commitment to academic excellence and personal growth empowers students to reach their full potential. Together, let us take this important step towards a bright and successful future.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Horton
Head of Key Stage 4



What is an (I)GCSE?

(I)GCSEs are internationally recognised high school qualifications that serve as a gateway to further academic study, both in the UK and globally. These qualifications provide a strong foundation for progression to A (Advanced)-levels or equivalent international qualifications and, ultimately, university education.

Designed for students aged 14 and above, (I)GCSEs mark the culmination of High School education. Examinations are taken at the end of Year 11 and assess knowledge, skills, and understanding in a wide range of subjects, preparing students for the next stage of their academic journey.

How are (I)GCSEs Graded?

The (I)GCSE grading system was reformed to improve clarity and ensure a greater distinction between different levels of student achievement. The new system replaces the traditional A*–G grades with a numerical scale from 9–1.

U	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
U	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A*	

Key Stage 4 Curriculum

The Key Stage 4 curriculum at Durham is designed to provide a balanced and comprehensive education that prepares students for further academic study or future career pathways. It consists of a combination of compulsory non-examined subjects, core (I)GCSE subjects, and option (I)GCSEs.

Core non-examined subjects - Focus on personal development, well-being, and ethical understanding.

- Physical Education
- Moral Education
- Islamic Studies (Muslim students)

Compulsory (I)GCSEs - Provide essential skills and knowledge across core academic areas

- Arabic
- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics (with the possibility of Further Mathematics)
- Science (with the possibility of Triple Award Science)

Optional (I)GCSE - Students will be able to choose three additional subjects based on their interests and future aspirations.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| • Physical Education | • French |
| • Business Studies | • Spanish |
| • Art and Design | • Geography |
| • Computer Science | |
| • History | |
| • Media | |



Core (I) GCSEs

English Language

Students develop reading, writing and speaking skills by analysing fiction and non-fiction texts. They will explore how writers use language and complete tasks in descriptive, narrative, and transactional writing. A speaking component includes presenting or discussions to build communication and critical thinking.



English Literature

Students study novels, plays and poetry, analysing, themes, characters, language, and context. They develop skills in comparing texts, interpreting literary techniques, and exploring historical and cultural influences. The course encourages critical thinking and personal responses to literature.

Mathematics

Students cover topics like algebra, geometry, probability, and statistics. They develop problem-solving, reasoning, and analytical skills, applying mathematics to real-life scenarios. The course balances non-calculator and calculator-based methods, emphasising clear communication of solutions.



Science

Students study biology, chemistry, and physics, learning about cells, reactions, forces, and energy. Practical experiments help develop scientific skills and understanding. The course emphasises applying science to everyday life and building a foundation for further study to A-level and beyond.

Arabic

Students develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in Arabic. They work on creative and practical writing, improve fluency through speaking tasks, and engage with varied texts. The course builds cultural awareness and practical language use, both of which are fundamental to values of tolerance and respect in the UAE.



Additional Options

Further Mathematics and Triple Science are offered as additional options for students who demonstrate a strong academic ability and a readiness to meet the challenges of these demanding subjects. Selection for these courses will be based on prior attainment and teacher recommendations, ensuring that students are well-suited to the rigorous content and pace. These options provide an excellent foundation for further study in STEM fields.

Further Pure Mathematics

In Further Mathematics and Triple Science are offered as additional options for students who demonstrate a strong academic ability and a readiness to meet the challenges of these demanding subjects. Selection for these courses will be based on prior attainment and teacher recommendations, ensuring that students are well-suited to the rigorous content and pace. These options provide an excellent foundation for further study in STEM fields.



Triple Science

Triple Science (I)GCSE allows students to study Biology, Chemistry, and Physics as separate subjects, providing a deeper understanding of scientific concepts and practical skills. It is ideal for those with a keen interest in science and a strong aptitude for the subject, offering excellent preparation for A-level sciences and careers in scientific fields.



Physical Education

Summary:

In (I)GCSE PE, students will study how the body works during exercise, including anatomy, movement, and physical training. They will explore health, fitness, sport psychology, and societal influences on sport. The practical aspect includes performing in three activities. Students will also plan, monitor, and evaluate their own exercise program.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Component 1: Fitness and Body Systems	Written Examination: 90 minutes	36%
Component 2: Health and Performance	Written Examination: 75 minutes	24%
Component 3: Practical Performance	External Moderation: 3 sports; 1 team, 1 individual and 1 team or individual	30%
Component 4: Personal Exercise Plan	Internally assessed and external moderated coursework	10%

Skills

Teamwork
Leadership
Communication
Problem-Solving
Resilience Decision-Making
Critical Thinking
Analytical Skills
Interrupting
Data Self-Evaluation



Pathways

PE Teacher
Performance Analyst
Sports Development Officer
Physiotherapist
Nutritionist
Coach
Journalist
Media
Psychologist
Scientist



Business Studies

Summary:

In (I)GCSE Business, students will explore how businesses function, focusing on key topics such as marketing, finance, human resources, and operations. They will apply theoretical knowledge to case studies, analyse business environments, and develop entrepreneurial thinking, preparing them for careers in business or further study in economics, management, or entrepreneurship.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Investigating small businesses	Written Examination: 90 minutes	50%
Investigating large businesses	Written Examination: 90 minutes	50%

Skills

Analytical Thinking
Problem-Solving
Time Management
Communication
Financial Literacy
Marketing Awareness
Entrepreneurial Mindset
Teamwork & Leadership
Business Ethics
Global Business Awareness



Pathways

Entrepreneur
Marketing
Executive Finance
Analyst
Human Resources Manager
Business Consultant
Accountant
Sales Manager
Operations Manager
Economist
Retail Manager



Art and Design

Summary:

In (I)GCSE Art and Design, students will experiment with various artistic techniques and media such as painting, drawing, and sculpture to develop their personal artistic vision. They will also research artistic movements, contexts, and respond to real-world stimuli, producing a portfolio that demonstrates both creativity and technical skills, leading to personal growth as artists and critical thinkers,

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Component 1: Personal Portfolio	Coursework	50%
Component 2: Externally Set Assignment	Exam: 10 hours	50%

Skills

Creativity
Critical Thinking
Problem-Solving
Time Management
Communication
Research Skills
Attention to Detail
Resilience
Adaptability
Digital Skills



Pathways

Artist
Graphic Designer
Illustrator
Animator
Art Director
Fashion Designer
Interior Designer
Museum/Gallery Manager
Multimedia Artist
Art Teacher



French

Summary:

In (I)GCSE French, students will practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing to communicate effectively on topics such as health, leisure, and global issues. They will also engage with the cultural aspects of French-speaking countries, developing a broader understanding of cultural contexts and preparing them for further language learning and international communication.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Home and Abroad Employment and Education Personal Life and Relationships The World Around Us Social Activities, Fitness and Health	Listening 30 minutes + 5 minutes reading time	25 %
	Reading and Writing 1h 45 minutes	50%
	Speaking 8-10 minutes	25%

Skills

- Communication Skills
- Listening Skills
- Cultural Awareness
- Problem-Solving
- Time Management
- Teamwork
- Writing Skills
- Research Skills
- Adaptability
- Critical Thinking



Pathways

- Translator
- Diplomat
- Tourism and Travel
- Language Teacher
- International Business
- Journalist
- Marketing Specialist
- Customer Service
- Import/Export Coordinator
- Flight Attendant



Spanish

Summary:

In (I)GCSE Spanish, students will develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, enabling them to communicate confidently in Spanish across a range of everyday topics such as home life, education, and leisure. They will also deepen their cultural awareness, learning about the customs, traditions, and values of Spanish-speaking countries, which supports both personal growth and academic development Communication.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Home and Abroad Employment and Education Personal Life and Relationships The World Around Us Social Activities, Fitness and Health	Listening 30 minutes + 5 minutes reading time	25%
	Reading and Writing 1h 45 minutes	50%
	Speaking 8-10 minutes	25%

Skills

- Communication Skills
- Listening Skills
- Cultural Awareness
- Problem-Solving
- Time Management
- Teamwork
- Writing Skills
- Research Skills
- Adaptability
- Critical Thinking



Pathways

- Translator
- Diplomat
- Tourism and Travel
- Language Teacher
- International Business
- Journalist
- Marketing Specialist
- Customer Service
- Import/Export Coordinator
- Flight Attendant



History

Summary:

In (I)GCSE History, students will investigate significant historical events, people, and themes, such as international relations, revolutions, and the causes of conflict in the modern world. They will evaluate primary and secondary sources, analyse evidence, and construct reasoned arguments about how history shapes contemporary society, fostering critical thinking and an appreciation for the past.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Paper 1: Depth studies Germany: development of dictatorship 1918-1945 A world divided: superpower relations 1943-72	Written examination. 90 minutes	50%
Paper 2: Investigation and breadth studiesThe origins and the course of WWI 1905-18. Changes in medicine c1848-1948	Written examination 90 minutes	50%

Skills

- Research Skills
- Critical Thinking
- Analytical Skills
- Problem-Solving
- Communication Skills
- Writing and Report Writing
- Time Management
- Attention to Detail
- Argumentation and Debate
- Cultural Awareness



Pathways

- Historian
- Archivist
- Teacher/Lecturer
- Museum Curator
- Tour Guide
- Journalist
- Researcher
- Policy Analyst
- Public Relations Officer
- Heritage Manager



Geography

Summary:

In (I)GCSE Geography, students will study physical and human processes, including ecosystems, natural hazards, and urban development, while understanding how human activity impacts the environment. They will use data analysis, geographic tools, and fieldwork techniques to explore global and local geographical issues, developing problem-solving skills that apply to both scientific and social contexts.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Paper 1: physical geography Coastal environments Hazardous environments	Written examination 70 minutes. The questions are a mixture of multiple-choice, short- answer, data-response and open- ended questions.	40%
Paper 2: human geography Urban environments Economic activity and energy Fragile environments	Written examination. 105 minutes. The questions are a mixture of multiple-choice, short- answer, data-response and open- ended questions.	60%

Skills

- Research Skills
- Analytical Thinking
- Data Interpretation
- Problem-Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Communication Skills
- Time Management
- Collaboration
- Decision Making
- Presentation Skills



Pathways

- Urban Planner
- Environmental Consultant
- Cartographer
- Geospatial Analyst
- Teacher/Lecturer
- Climate Change Analyst
- Travel and Tourism
- Disaster Management
- Sustainability Consultant
- Policy Analyst



Computer Science

Summary:

In (I)GCSE Computer Science, students will study computational thinking, algorithms, programming, and the broader impact of technology on society. They will engage in practical problem-solving by designing, implementing, and testing algorithms and programs in languages such as Python, C#, or Java, which will develop their skills in coding and computational theory, preparing them for further studies in computer science or technology-based careers.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Principles of Computer Science: Problem Solving Data Computers Communication and the internet The bigger picture	Written Examination: 120 minutes	50%
Application of Computational Thinking: Programming Problem Solving	Practical and Written Examination: 180 minutes	50%

Skills

Problem-Solving
Logical Thinking
Analytical Skills
Attention to Detail
Creativity
Collaboration
Time Management
Technical Writing
Adaptability
Project Management



Pathways

Artificial Intelligence Engineer
Database Administrator
Software Developer
Cybersecurity Analyst
Systems Analyst
Network Engineer
Game Developer
IT Support Specialist
Web Developer
Data Analyst



Media Studies

Summary:

The (I)GCSE Media course introduces students to key concepts in media analysis, production, and critique. It covers media language, representation, audience, industries, and contexts, exploring how meaning is created and how media targets and engages audiences. Combining theoretical study with practical production, students develop critical thinking, creativity, and technical skills, preparing them for further studies or careers in media.

Course Structure	Assessment Type	Weighting
Media language Media representations	Written Examination; 120 minutes	50%
Media industries Media audiences	Non-exam assessment (NEA) – creating a media product	50%

Skills

Creativity and innovation
Communication Skills
Research and Analysis
Critical Thinking
Digital Literacy
Teamwork and Collaboration
Project Management
Time Management
Problem-Solving
Presentation Skills



Pathways

Film Director
Journalist
Social Media Manager
Television Producer
Advertising Executive
Graphic Designer
Public Relations Officer
Photographer
Video Editor
Content Creator



Choosing The Right Options

Minimal Requirements

Ensure you meet the minimum skill or grade requirements before choosing specialised (I)GCSEs such as Music, Triple Award Science, or Further Pure Mathematics.

Interest and Passion

Choose subjects that you genuinely enjoy or have an interest in. Enjoying what you study will help keep you motivated and engaged.

Strengths and Abilities

Reflect on your strengths. Choosing subjects that match your abilities can help you achieve better results and make studying feel less overwhelming.

Future Career Plans

Consider your future career goals. Some subjects are necessary for specific career paths.

Practical Subjects

If you enjoy hands-on learning, consider practical subjects such as PE and Art and Design.

Consult Parents and Teachers

Discuss your choices with your parents and teachers. Have open conversations about what subjects will best support your future goals.

Don't Choose Based on Popularity

It's tempting to pick subjects because they're popular or because your friends are taking them. Make sure your decisions are based on your own interests and long-term plans.

