

Maximizing Your Sixth Form Experience

Strategies for Success and Preparing for Life Beyond 15

Maximizing Your Sixth Form Experience and Life Post-15

Transitioning into sixth form and the subsequent years is an exciting and pivotal time in your educational journey. It is a period ripe with opportunities for personal growth, academic achievement, and the development of skills that will serve you well into adulthood. This guide aims to help you make the most of your sixth form experience and prepare for life beyond 15.



If you've come up through Bishop Luffa School then some of your teachers at A-level may be the same as you've had lower down in the school, but if you're moving schools, you'll have a whole new set of teachers to try to impress. If you're staying on at Bishop Luffa and you previously had a reputation as someone who doesn't work hard enough, or who has the wrong attitude, now's the time to change your teachers' view of you. If you're at a new school, show the teachers from the word go that you're a model student who's determined to get top grades. In a year's time, your teachers will be writing your university or character reference for you, and it's vital that you give them a good impression, with an admirable attitude and

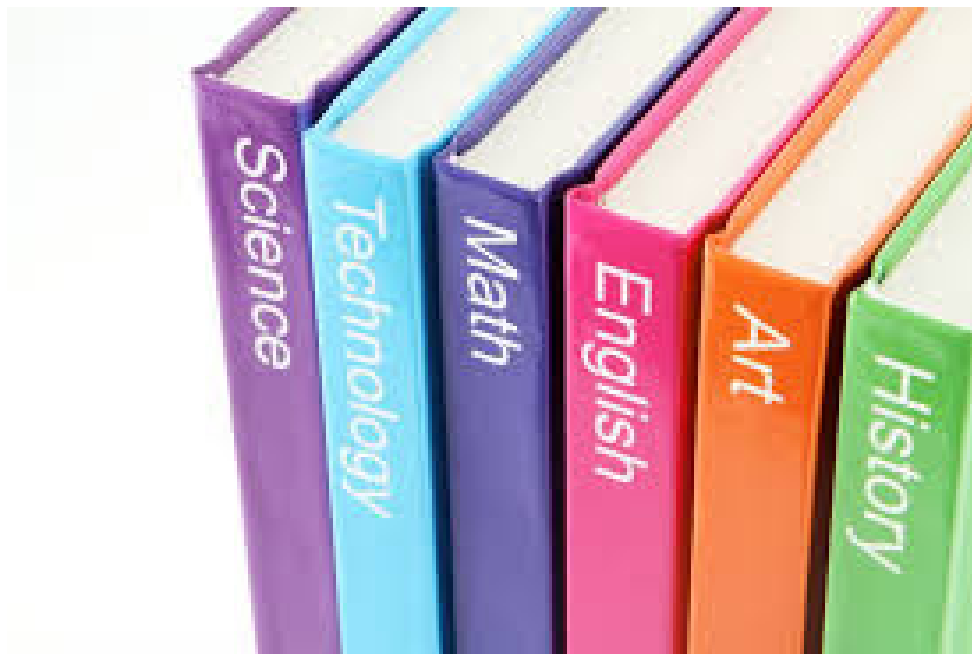
making a real effort to produce outstanding work. Ask them for extra work, speak out in class with intelligent opinions, and hand homework in early but definitely on time! It might be hard work, but it's worth it if you're rewarded with an exemplary reference.

If you're starting new at Bishop Luffa Sixth Form, or many of your friends are leaving to do their A-levels or other courses elsewhere, you may be worrying about your ability to make new friends. There's no need to be concerned! The great thing about Sixth Form is that everyone's there because they want to be, not because they have to be. This means that those taking A-levels are generally more committed to their studies, and you'll therefore be among more like-minded people. There are plenty of opportunities for making new friends at Sixth Form, the most obvious place being in class: there will be lots of group work at A-level, so you'll naturally mix with others. Once you've got chatting in class, you can develop new friendships from there, perhaps by suggesting meeting up in free periods or at lunchtime, whether to study together or to have a coffee - we have a Costa Coffee Shop in the Sixth Form Centre - shhhhh don't tell the rest of the school!

Choosing the Right Subjects

You've decided that A Levels are for you; maybe you want to go to University, complete a Degree Apprentice or enter the work force. Whichever direction you envisage selecting the right subjects is crucial as it shapes your academic trajectory and future opportunities. Here's how to make informed choices:

- **Assess Your Interests and Strengths:** Choose subjects that genuinely interest you and where you have demonstrated strengths. Passion fuels persistence and success. Do not pick a subject based on whether a friend is doing it or not. If you honestly don't enjoy the subject then you won't be the work in.
- **Consider Future Aspirations:** If you have a career or university course in mind, ensure your subject choices align with these goals. Research any prerequisites - hopefully you did then when applying for Sixth Form.
- **Seek Guidance:** Talk to teachers, career adviser (Mrs Hopp in the Sixth Form Centre), and family members for advice. They can provide valuable insights and help you weigh your options.
- **AS Levels:** Don't be fooled into thinking that AS-levels don't matter, or that you can relax this year and make up for it next year. AS-levels constitute 50% of your entire grade, so if you do well in them, you have a good head start towards your final grade, and it takes the pressure off slightly in your second year. If you don't work hard enough for your AS-levels, you'll make your second year extremely stressful, because you'll have to work even harder to get the grades you want. What's more, you'll need to work extra hard in your first year of A-levels, because your AS grades will determine your predicted grades – and these are all universities have to go on when assessing your current level of academic ability. If you have poor predicted grades because you haven't worked hard enough in your AS year, this will have a big impact on the success with which you'll be able to apply to top universities.



Developing Effective Study Habits

Success in Sixth Form requires a disciplined approach to studying (*check out our Study Skills Guide*). If you don't adopt the right approach from the start it will be hard to change. Most students plan their day in school and in doing so they have more freedom outside of school, but you have to find out what works for you quickly. It can be hard for some students not to get sidetracked by their new found freedom! Free periods in your school timetable will probably be a novelty for you, but you shouldn't waste them. Use them productively to write up your notes from class and get homework done, as this reduces the amount of homework you need to do when you get home, and frees up time to spend on reading more widely and developing new knowledge and skills in preparation for university. You can use lunch breaks productively as well, by going to the library to do some work after a short break to eat. Not only does this give you extra study time, but it also stops you spending money going to the shops or sitting in a cafe during your free time. Here are some tips to enhance your study habits:

- **Create a Study Schedule:** Allocate specific times for studying each subject - if you have 5 hours of lessons then the expectation from the start is that you complete 5 hours of study outside the classroom. Do this from the start, make it habit. Consistency helps in retaining information and reduces last-minute stress.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Break down your study material into manageable chunks and set achievable goals. This approach boosts motivation and productivity. Check out our Study Skills Guide for lots of different suggestions on how to complete independent study.
- **Utilise Resources:** Make the most of available resources such as the Sixth Form Library, The Study Hub, online subscriptions to journals, online courses, and study groups. Diversifying your study methods can deepen understanding. You will be left to your own devices as to how to study and revise. We can give you hints, tips and guidelines but only you can truly know what you enjoy and what helps you retain that knowledge, develop those skills but one thing not to do is just write up your notes; this will not work in the long run - keep your notes organised but vary your approach.

- **Past Papers:** Past papers are a really useful way of gauging what level you're working at, and they get you used to the style of questions you can expect in the real exam. They're going to be tougher than GCSE exam questions, so it's a good idea to start getting used to them as early as you can. They also give you practice at working out timings for questions. Try to start taking past papers early on, whenever you reach the end of each module; this forces you to revise what you've done for that module. Ask your teacher to mark it for you and take on board any feedback you get back to help you understand where you need to improve.
- **Alternative Resources:** When it comes to A-level study, you don't just have to rely on textbooks to get you through your course material. Try to utilise as many different resources as you can, as this will give you different ways of looking at the syllabus that will help you absorb information more easily. For example, YouTube is full of videos explaining A-level concepts. Paj Holden, for instance, produces useful videos for A-level Economics students. Other kinds of resources you could use might include revision guides, webinars, the library and museums, to name but a few.



Embracing Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are a vital part of sixth form life. They offer opportunities to develop skills outside the classroom:

- **Join Clubs and Societies:** Whether it's sports, drama, or debate, participating in clubs enhances teamwork, leadership, and communication skills. All of these things are also great at broadening life skills and friendship circles; and they can also be added to job applications, university and apprenticeship applications
- **Volunteer:** Engaging in community service fosters empathy and a sense of responsibility. It also enhances your resume and university applications.
- **Pursue Personal Projects:** Dedicate time to personal interests or projects. This could be anything from writing a blog to learning a new language.



Discovering Super - curricular Activities

Super-curricular activities are educational activities pursued outside of the standard school curriculum that are relevant to your academic interests and future study or career paths. These activities demonstrate your passion and commitment to a subject beyond what is taught in the classroom, showcasing your independent learning and critical thinking skills.

- **Reading:** Explore books, journals, articles, and online resources related to your subject of interest.
- **Research:** Undertake independent research projects, potentially related to university courses or career paths.
- **Competitions:** Participate in subject-specific competitions like math challenges or essay contests.
- **Summer Schools & Taster Courses:** Attend summer programs or online courses offered by universities to gain deeper insights into your field of study.
- **Museums & Cultural Sites:** Visit museums, galleries, historical sites, or attend events related to your academic interests.
- **Online Resources:** Utilise educational platforms, podcasts, documentaries, and online courses related to your subject.
- **Societies and Clubs:** Engage in subject-specific societies or clubs, which can provide opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and further exploration.
- **Connecting Ideas:** Look for links between different super-curricular activities and consider how they relate to your broader academic goals, demonstrating your ability to make connections and synthesise information.



Why are Super-Curricular Activities Important?

- **Demonstrates Passion and Commitment:** Super-curricular activities show universities and employers that you are genuinely interested in your subject and willing to go the extra mile.
- **Develops Key Skills:** They help you develop essential skills like independent learning, critical thinking, research, and time management, which are crucial for academic success.
- **Informs University Choices:** By exploring different areas of a subject, you can make more informed decisions about your university course and future career.
- **Enhances Personal Statements:** Super-curricular activities can be highlighted in personal statements to showcase your suitability for a course and demonstrate your unique qualities.
- **Prepares for Higher Education:** Universities value students who can demonstrate their ability to learn independently and engage with academic content beyond the classroom.



Building Essential Life Skills

Sixth form is an ideal time to develop life skills that will benefit you in adulthood:

- **Time Management:** Balancing academics, activities, and personal time requires effective time management. Use planners or digital tools to stay organised. Whatever your next steps are you will have to manage your time - independence and freedom is great but with it comes great responsibility. If you struggle meeting deadlines then speak to someone and they will be able to talk through and help you prioritise things.

- **Financial Literacy:** Learn the basics of budgeting, saving, and managing money. These skills are invaluable as you move towards independence. If you have a part time job, that's great. A Saturday job while you're in Sixth Form doesn't just give you some extra pocket money: it allows you to develop non-academic skills that will be useful for university and your future career. This might include customer service and sales skills, as well as working well within a team. Such skills are essential in business, whatever level you operate at, and the teamwork element will be particularly useful for group work at university. But don't let your job take over your spare time; if you find your grades are suffering, it's preferable to give up your part-time work, as good grades will benefit you more at this stage in your life.
- **Critical Thinking:** Engage in activities that challenge you to think critically and solve problems. This skill is essential in both academic and real-world scenarios.



Preparing for the Future

As you progress through sixth form, start preparing for life beyond:

- **Explore Career Options:** Research potential career paths and consider internships or work experience to gain insights into different professions. Students have managed to secure some amazing work experience opportunities - start putting the feelers out early to secure something that you are excited about.
- **Plan for Higher Education:** If you're considering university, familiarise yourself with the application process and entry requirements. Attend open days and speak to alumni. At Bishop Luffa Sixth Form we have the Next Steps Day after Year 12 mock exams. This is an

informative day where outside speakers come in to school and talk about the process. Parents are invited to an evening presentation - we provide subscription to Unifrog so that you can explore all possibilities. We provide lots of opportunities to keep you informed on next steps - use them!

- **Consider Alternative Pathways:** University isn't the only option. Apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships, vocational training, and entrepreneurship are viable paths to consider. Look at all the pros and cons, talk to people - it's an exciting time.



Maintaining Well-being

Your well-being is paramount during this time:

- **Prioritise Mental Health:** Keep stress in check by practicing mindfulness, seeking support when needed, and maintaining a healthy balance between work and leisure. Your Form Tutor will be your main point of contact - you should be able to approach them with any issues and they will help point you in the right direction if that's needed.
- **Stay Physically Active:** Regular exercise boosts mood and energy levels. Find activities you enjoy to make physical activity a regular part of your routine. We live in a beautiful part of the world and whether you want to walk on the South Downs or head to the beach getting out in nature is good for you.
- **Build a Support Network:** Surround yourself with friends, family, and mentors who support and encourage you. A strong network is vital for emotional well-being.



By following these guidelines, you can make the most of your sixth form years and set a solid foundation for life beyond 15. Embrace the challenges and opportunities that come your way, and remember that this is a time for exploration, growth, and self-discovery.

Sixth Form is a time when you've finally left behind the subjects you disliked at GCSE and you're now able to concentrate on subjects that genuinely interest you. What's more, you're working towards studying your favourite subject at university or about to embark on training in the big wide world. Although A-levels are harder work than GCSEs, you'll probably find that you really enjoy Sixth Form and the new challenges it brings. It's also a time to make the most of home comforts and spending time with your parents and friends before you go to university. Enjoy it, and remember that all this hard work will pay off, even if it doesn't always feel like it at the time.



Please note that all information in this guide is gathered from across the WWW and various organisations and is by no means the only information out there but you will find more information on Google. Please do your own research and use this document as a platform to get you started.