



PLYMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

WELCOME TO SIXTH FORM

SHARED EXPERIENCES
FROM CURRENT SIXTH
FORM STUDENTS ABOUT
THEIR TRANSITION FROM
GCSEs TO A-LEVELS...



Introduction...

Transitioning from a year 11 GCSE student into sixth form can seem like a daunting jump. However we have put together a booklet sharing some experiences from current year 12 students at Plymouth High to try and put your mind at ease and reassure you that, whilst the jump can be a little bit scary to begin with, in reality it is an exciting opportunity to look forward to.

In this booklet you will find a paragraph from a student studying each current A-Level on offer at Plymouth High followed by a series of more general comments about the transition from year 11 into year 12. I really hope that this booklet is able to help you and make the move into sixth form seem less intimidating.

- Jess (current Head Student)

Subjects Included in Booklet:

Art

Biology

Business

Chemistry

English Literature

French

Further Maths

Geography

German

History

Law

Maths

PE

Physics

Politics

Psychology

Product Design

Religious Studies

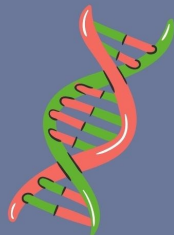
Theatre Studies

Art



A-Level Art is definitely a step-up from GCSE in the best way. It has many of the same tasks and skills, but you're given more freedom and opportunities to explore different media. The first part of the course is dedicated entirely to experimenting, with each lesson being a different media or technique. This allows you to step outside your comfort zone and discover things you may well have never thought of before. Then, when you move onto the projects, you're prepared to experiment more. The coursework can be intensive, but you have the opportunity to present it in almost any way you can think of. Overall, if you're passionate about Art and Design, this A-Level is very much a good choice.

- Jaime



Biology

Biology challenges you to think about every aspect of life. The variety of topics means there is something everyone will enjoy learning about, and the A-level really deepens your knowledge. In year 12, I have especially enjoyed learning about genetics and transport in animals. Biology also links well with other subjects, and you often will find that something you learn in biology you may also learn about in other subjects, for example chemistry or geography. One thing I have found challenging about the subject is that there is a lot of content to get through. However, the teachers are always ready to help you through it and because it is such a popular subject you can find plenty of support on the internet or in books. Studying biology means I can apply what I have learnt to the real world which is really useful and rather fun!

- Abigail

Business



Doing A-Level business has been a brilliant decision. The subject gives you key insights into how several businesses operate and grow in their respective industries. Taking the subject as an A-Level also provides you with highly useful information on financing which can be both applied in everyday life and in potentially starting up your own business in the future. The teachers also make the lessons highly enjoyable and the content easy to understand for all students.

- Sam



Chemistry

I had always found chemistry quite challenging at GCSE, and still do at A-level but I think that is why it is my favourite subject, because it is so rewarding when you then get a question right. I find that it has a great balance between maths and science, and as someone who doesn't take maths at A-level I enjoy the challenge that the maths questions bring without feeling overwhelmed by them. Chemistry takes a lot of logical thinking and hard work, but it is also a very enjoyable and interesting subject. We study things that you can recognise in the real world; for example we have just started learning about Benzene which is a compound that is used in many medicines. I couldn't recommend chemistry more; it is a very worthwhile subject that is also highly respected by universities!

- Lara

English Literature

English is both a highly respected and highly enjoyable A-Level. The step up from GCSE is an exciting one rather than scary and studying for this subject at A-Level allows for greater discussion and freedom to read around genres that you enjoy. Taking English Literature was one of my best decisions and has sparked a new passion for the subject, allowing me to further develop my essay technique and analysis skills. I think that the course is extremely interesting and has enabled me to study a variety of literature types such as plays and novels, as well as touching on on-screen adaptations that you can include in essays. Overall, I cannot recommend this subject highly enough!

- Jess

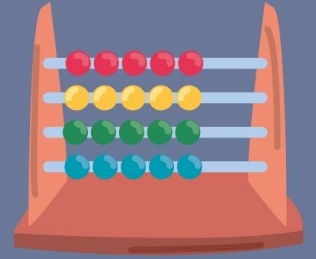


French

A-level French is so diverse, allowing me to learn more about the culture and traditions of French-speaking countries (not only France!) while at the same time developing my language skills far beyond GCSE. The patterns in grammar have also helped me in the sciences, where the trends in data and observations are important. Studying a language to this level is very rewarding, and I would highly recommend it.

- Elizabeth

Further Maths



When I decided to take Further Maths, I didn't really know a lot about the subject. I was told it was difficult (as I expected) but no one I knew actually studied it. Hopefully, if you feel anything like I did this could help you. Further Maths extends the topics you look at in Maths A-Level as well as introducing you to completely new topics you will have never seen before. At some points the difficulty matches Maths A-Level and at others it will be harder but at no point will it feel impossible. As the class sizes are normally smaller than most, lessons can feel like one-on-one tutoring, and that means it's easy to go back over topics you may struggle with. Overall, I really enjoy Further Maths, it's challenging and if you enjoy Maths, it's definitely a subject to consider.

- Alanna

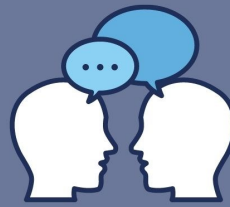


Geography

During my GCSEs, Geography was one of my favourite subjects, as I found it challenging, while also being interesting – with a mix of human and physical geography – and I particularly found topics such as globalisation and geopolitics fascinating, always trying to learn more outside school. These topics were partly the reason why I chose to continue with it as an A-Level; and I have found that the subject now goes into further detail on these and many other topics, including superpowers, human rights, coasts, energy security and the carbon cycle. Geography requires you to be interested about the world around you, making links between real-world examples in the questions. I highly recommend A-Level Geography if you are passionate about the world around you, and love making links between other subjects.

- Dominique

German



German is quite an informal lesson, where we are no doubt pushed to do well but with minimal pressure and stress. It is ideal for a new student, as you quickly build a rapport with the whole class through discussing topical issues, insights into films, your favourite cultural festivals, or simply the German language; the range of debate is very broad and always engaging. We also learn German history and have just finished a chapter on Berlin through the Cold War. Therefore, we were assessing politics, culture, and parts of the economy - in German obviously. My favourite part of lessons though is dissecting the words and grammar; how German is built. Our teacher also enjoys this, and German is at no loss for interesting grammar. Work and homework for German is always on-going, but it is also quite varied so in some ways easier to motivate yourself for. At the moment, most of our homework is dedicated to research for the IRP (independent research project). The IRP is part of the speaking exam and can be on anything relating to Germany in some way; it's a great opportunity to be more free in what you're learning, some examples of this year's IRPs would be: Sigmund Freud, the German Economy, German Food, and the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. In short anyone with an interest in the world and other cultures, who wish to gain invaluable language skills alongside this, would really enjoy a German (or language) A-Level.

- Ella



History

I have always found History to be engaging and fun, but at A-level it is even more so, allowing you to go much deeper into the subject than at GCSE. The course itself is very interesting, with a wide variety of aspects to it which thoroughly enrich your learning. Some parts can be challenging as there is quite a lot of content, but it is a hugely rewarding subject to study, so don't be put off if it feels daunting. History is a really useful subject to do as it teaches you so many transferable skills, especially when it comes to writing and it therefore links nicely with other subjects, such as Politics or English. It is also appreciated and respected by many universities making it very useful in the future so I would highly recommend it!

- Holly

Law



A-Level Law covers a wide breadth of topics that helps set foundations for either a Law degree at university or applying law to everyday life. The teachers are amazing and provide us with engaging learning resources, that spark further discussion and learning within classes. There are plenty of extracurricular activities in relation to the subject, such as external essay writing competitions and being Law subject captain entails a plethora of responsibilities, like setting up display boards and liaising with the teachers to convey the class's opinions.

- Lauren



Maths

I've found Maths A-Level interesting but challenging so far, as it's stretched my previous understanding and built upon the foundations previously set at GCSE. What I've found most interesting is the application of new Maths skills to real life situations, especially through the mechanics topics. I would recommend it, it's really fulfilling and will help you in any sciences you do.

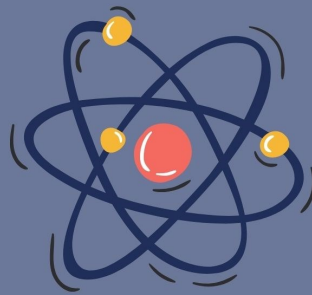
- Maisy

PE



I thoroughly enjoyed PE at GCSE but felt that it was a shame that there wasn't much time to cover the psychology and socio-cultural topics in great detail. At A-Level, a more even amount of time is spent on these topics, as well as anatomy and physiology. If you enjoyed PE at GCSE, you will definitely love it at A-Level because the topics covered are very similar, only at A-Level your knowledge is extended even further when studying the subject in greater detail. Another great thing about A-Level PE is that it has fairly widespread content, so there is a lot of cross over with other subjects. For example, I take PE and Psychology, and there are lots of the same topics are covered in both, but it's really interesting because you get to learn it from a different perspective and with new application.

- Eloise



Physics

Doing A-level physics can be very challenging at times, but the reward from understanding such a varied subject is worth it. Learning about the way physics works and knowing that what you learn can be applied in so many different contexts is part of what makes A Level Physics so great. You do have to do a lot of maths for Physics, though. It's completely possible to do well in Physics without also taking A Level Maths, but you should make sure you're confident with the bits of maths that you do use (particularly algebra), as a lot of marks are awarded for maths in the exams. You should also be prepared to talk to your teachers if you are having a hard time with the content (though this is the same for most A Levels).

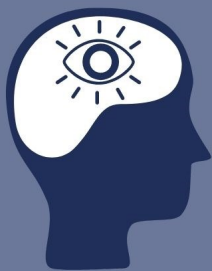
- Jacob

Politics



I decided to take politics A-level to get a better understanding of the world around me and how it works. In the first year of the course we look at UK politics (e.g the different parties, government and ideologies) which is really interesting, I especially enjoyed learning about ideologies such as conservatism and anarchism and how different ideas can stem from the same places and grow into completely different things. Next year (year 13) I get to learn about global politics. It is really fun to see the things you do in class on the news because it grounds your education in the real world and makes it feel worthwhile. Plus, it's good to have debates as not only is it entertaining, it also develops great skills for later life when you apply for university or jobs as it demonstrates communication and listening skills.

- Jada



Psychology

Psychology is not a subject that is offered at GCSE so it is something new for everyone in the class; it merges the experiments of science with the essay writing structure of RS. It is a stimulating subject that makes you think more about your inner workings and the reasons behind certain behaviours within yourself and society. The whole subject is about people, so naturally, you can draw from past experiences and what we see in the world around us. Each topic is very different so there will be topics that you enjoy more than others. There is a lot of content to remember but the lessons are structured in a way that will help you answer the exam questions easier. Psychology requires a lot of hard work and thinking but I would definitely recommend the subject.

- Naomi

Product Design

As I loved Graphic design at GCSE, I wanted to continue my passion for creation and innovation through to A-Level. Product design gives you the freedom to experiment with and discover the design media of your choice all whilst learning the depths of consumer needs and business environments. A key aspect of designing is critical and logical thinking.

Creating products to fill a gap in the market is not always straightforward and can take some resilience, however seeing the outcome of a project that you've worked so long and hard on is very rewarding. As of now we have just started our final A-Level coursework into which we are all diving headfirst with a plethora of fantastic ideas, as your project can be whatever you desire! I would definitely recommend Product Design due to the free and fun nature of the subject. It is also very useful if you are considering any type of future in design, e.g architecture or graphic design.

- Venus

Religious Studies

RS A-Level is an enriching and intriguing subject that has proved to me to develop skills and knowledge that help me in my life outside school. There are three sections to this subject- Buddhism, Ethics, and Philosophy- and because of this wide breadth of topics, you learn a lot of things that are very interesting. The subject allows for deep and lighter discussion that are both enjoyable and informative. The workload is mostly focused around revision, research, and essay-writing; but the essay questions are varied and interesting to answer. It's definitely worth choosing if you're interested in the discussion aspect of RS, as well as Philosophy and Ethics.

- Jaime

Theatre Studies



As somebody who is studying for two other essay-based subjects alongside Theatre Studies, this A-Level is a great balance between practical assessments and written elements. I find that Theatre Studies is a great way to break up other subjects with engaging practical drama that is not only enjoyable but has also helped me develop a wide range of skills such as communication and teamwork. I would strongly recommend this A-Level to somebody who enjoys acting and creativity, as this subject allows a great deal of freedom and expression to explore areas of theatre that you are interested in. Currently, we are working on our devising performances, which is a great opportunity to share ideas in order to put together our own piece of theatre, allowing for discussion related to other design elements such as music and lighting if this is something you are enthusiastic about.

- Jess

Turn over for general comments
about transitioning into sixth
form...

Students Who Stayed on at PHSG:

Having been a student at Plymouth High since year 7 I had got very used to the way of life here. I knew that it was a place in which I was comfortable and somewhere where I could achieve my academic potential. The atmosphere created by both the staff and the students makes Plymouth High a welcoming place and the transition from year 11 to year 12 a very smooth one, for both new and existing students.

- Lara

I can remember being in year 11 and thinking the transition to sixth form looked really daunting, but in reality I found it to be fun, especially as so many of your friends stay on and you move up together. You can expect the workload to increase, but it is definitely manageable if you make sure to keep on top of it and work hard from the start. So far I've found sixth form to be even more rewarding and enjoyable than the lower school as you have more free time and greater freedom over your school/life balance. You get to make so many more friends and meet a wide range of people which makes the experience even more worthwhile. It can be challenging at times, but it's well worth it and the more you persevere, the better off you will be for it!

- Holly

Students Who Moved To Plymouth High:

As a new student at PHSG I found the sixth form students and staff to be really welcoming. Lots of parts of sixth form and A-Levels are new for everyone and as the cohort had changed, many students were making new friends anyway, so everyone was sort of in the same boat. My advice to any students joining or staying on for sixth form at PHSG would be to ensure you really enjoy the subjects you are taking and create a system to stay organised early on. This will mean you have plenty of time to socialise and have fun because you will be motivated to stay on top of your work.

- Kushla

Before my first day in the sixth form, I was anxious about getting accustomed with new surroundings due to being at a much larger school for 5 years. I feel that a common trend with external students at any school is that they are left 'to fight for themselves' and would often be late to lessons as a result to getting lost. This isn't the case with PHS however, the school site is easy to understand, and members of staff are always on hand to help. The time in which you spend with your form tutor on the first day is extremely beneficial, especially if you were transferring solo, to get to know new people and understand a bit more about the school that you may have not known from an interview or the open evening. I didn't really struggle with much when joining the sixth form as everything was all easy to understand which helped not only myself get to grips with sixth form.

- Lee

When I started at Plymouth High in year 12, I only knew one person in my whole year and I was very nervous for my first day, however by the time I was going home, I felt at ease at the school. This was because of the welcoming atmosphere of the sixth form, whereby the whole year can easily talk to each other and move between friendship groups, making it a perfect environment to quickly make friends. The 3 subjects I took: History, English Literature and Psychology, were for the first few weeks a big step up from GCSE standards but with the continuous support from my teachers and sixth form staff it became really easy to get into a good rhythm of keeping up with school work without letting work pile up. This was something that, from day one, I really liked about PHSG as they really prepare you with the skills for how to deal with the inevitable A level workload, which has made my whole A level experience much less stressful. This, combined with the friendly and relaxed attitude of all the pupils in the sixth form, has meant that I'm so happy I decided to join PHSG, as they have pushed me to achieve my full potential.

-Arissa

*Thank you for reading and we hope that
you enjoy your sixth form experience at
Plymouth High!*