Independent Study Guide
Introduction

Changes to the A Level specifications in September 2008 emphasised how important independent study skills have become. Students will not achieve their potential if they do not put in the work outside of the lesson. Assessment frequently asks students to apply their subject knowledge to unfamiliar contexts and it is difficult, if not impossible, to do this if you have not taken the time to extend your understanding independently.

Our students spend only a limited amount of time in lessons ...

- 38/52 weeks in the year
- 5/7 days in every week
- 4/24 hours in every day
- This adds up to approximately 8% of their time... Which leaves 92% outside teacher contact time.
- How do they use this time to learn? It makes a **BIG** difference.

This booklet aims to explain how to make the most of this time to achieve success.
Preparing for University

A Levels are intended to prepare students for undergraduate study and it is clear that if you can develop these independent study skills during your time in the Sixth Form, you will begin university with a head start. However, more than that, acquiring these skills will actually improve your chances of gaining a place at that university in the first place.

It is predicted that 40,000 students will achieve three A grades in their A Level results in 2010. This is one in every ten students and these 40,000 form the pool from which the most selective universities will recruit. Ultimately, there are more students competing for fewer places with better grades. Although there are over 55,000 courses available through UCAS, the majority of AAA candidates compete to get onto only 1500 of them. This means that there are approximately 26 AAA candidates competing for every one place; and for many courses this can rise to 200 – 300 applicants competing for every place.

So what does this mean for sixth formers? Basically, AAA is not enough anymore for these most competitive courses. Students need to be developing the independent study skills described in this booklet. Most importantly, they must be reading and pursuing activities beyond the A Level syllabus; the universities call these ‘Supercurricular Activities’ and they are more highly prized than extracurricular activities.

Oxford talks about the 3 Rs – reading, reading and reading! The Head of Student Recruitment describes it as ‘Sunday Afternoon Syndrome’. When you have finished all your school commitments, done your part time job etc, what do you do? Watch Glee? Top Gear? Students who receive offers from the most competitive courses will be pursuing their academic interest. They are intrinsically motivated and engaged. In addition, the majority of these resources are available for free – they are online or on ‘freeview’. They are your local libraries, museums; or even your local river or mountain. It is not an extensive home library or a trip to the Galapagos Islands.

However, this work must be outside the A Level syllabus – otherwise it just tells admissions tutors that you are good at doing what you are told! It is also important that you read critically. Many students are critical of a copy of Heat magazine or an episode of Big Brother but accept a broadsheet opinion piece at face value. So, in conclusion, if you are aiming for one of these courses, this kind of studying should be a pleasure not a chore!

Essential Study Skills for the Sixth Form

What follows is an introduction to the essential study skills you will need in the Sixth Form. The exact study skills you will need to develop will be dependent on the subjects you are studying and your own strengths and
Weakenesses. It is difficult to generalise about study skills, and you will need to work with your tutor and teachers to find your most effective approach to study. However, the section begins with ten top tips that everyone can follow!

1. **Get yourself organised** – keep your planner up to date, listing work set, work completed and work outstanding.

2. **Try and stick to a regular work rota:** do a little bit of study often, rather than leaving huge amounts of work to the eleventh hour before a deadline. Late work is invariably rushed, often incomplete, and of inferior quality, and by starting an assignment well in advance of a deadline you will get the chance to ask staff for help if you need it. Most ‘A’ level students need to work for between 14 and 16 hours per week outside of lessons.

3. **Work in a studious environment,** not somewhere where you will be distracted. At home, work somewhere where you will not be disturbed (and where you can leave books and folders safely). If you do need to work on a computer, make sure you are not signed into any social networking sites (MSN, Facebook) to avoid distractions.

4. **Define your work tasks.** Make sure you understand what is expected of you. Seek clarification if you are uncertain about essay titles, the parameters of note taking, etc.

5. **Don’t be afraid to ask for help** when you need it! Don’t suffer in silence and don’t pretend you understand something when you DO NOT.

6. **Use all the available resources:** teachers; textbooks; libraries; periodicals; the Internet; newspapers; television and radio; fellow students.

7. **Motivate yourself.** Have a goal to aim for ... on a micro scale a favourite TV programme in half an hour after some revision; on a longer scale a university grade offer.

8. **Work in attention span units.** Few students can work effectively for more than one hour before their concentration starts to ebb (this is particularly so with revision). Divide your working time up into attention span units (40-60 minutes) punctuated by short breaks.

9. **Get a dictionary!** Many exam boards now penalise poor spelling and grammar at ‘A’ level.

10. **The more you put in, the more you get out,** both in terms of **results** and **enjoyment.**
Reading and Noting

Reading is one of the core activities of studying. At A level you are faced with three particular challenges:

- The volume of reading
- The complexity of the material you will read
- Trying to remember what you have read.

1. A Reading Style

Skilled readers vary their reading speed and method to suit both the material they are reading and their purpose in reading it. You ‘read’ a telephone directory rather differently than a novel. There are several different approaches to reading. Here are some of the main techniques you can use:

- **Skimming**: this involves looking quickly through the book and reading only things like contents, headings, introductions and conclusions. It is a quick and efficient way of familiarising yourself with a publication and is useful if you wish to check whether a book is relevant, or for finding particular information or ideas quickly. Skimming is particularly useful for finding your way around a publication. You may skim the newspaper to find the articles you want to read, or a textbook to identify a relevant chapter.

- **Scanning**: this is a very rapid search for important points. It may be a diagram, a title or a key word. The essential thing is that you deliberately ignore everything except the one item for which you are scanning. Scanning is useful when you want to identify a particular piece of information – for example some specific chemical formulae.

- **Reading to understand**: this involves detailed study of a chapter, passage or article in order to absorb all the major facts and ideas. You may read it more than once, and take notes to summarise what you have read. Reading to understand is useful when you want to study something thoroughly.

- **Word-by-word reading**: very occasionally you actually need to read every word extremely carefully – for example, when reading an English Literature text or an exam question.

To study efficiently you must learn to vary your reading style and become proficient at each type of reading. By developing the ability to switch from one method of reading to another you will vastly increase your studying efficiency.

**Language Difficulties**

Reading is more difficult when the author uses technical terms or complex language. In this situation you should never guess meanings, but instead use dictionaries and subject glossaries to help you with definitions.
Responding to the Material
Reading is not a passive activity! You should be thinking about what you read...

- Do you agree with the author?
- What is the quality of the author’s argument?
- Do you have a different point of view?
- What counter arguments could you use?

Taking Notes

Clear accurate and comprehensive notes are vital to ‘A’ level success (Sod’s Law of Examination states that the topics you failed to note properly are the ones you will be examined on!)

The Process of Note Taking
Highlight and underline texts IF THEY ARE YOUR OWN. Highlighting and underlining focus your attention on the text and makes you think about what the key concepts and issues are.

Taking notes forces you to THINK: to grapple with the ideas in the text as you read them, because you have to decide what to write down and how to say it. What is more, if you read without taking notes, no matter how good your memory, you will find that ideas gradually drift away from you.

Notes should:

- **Summarise** the main theme of an article/chapter
- **Highlight** the key ideas and arguments used
- **List** out any important statistics/facts.

Notes are best presented in point form or under subheadings with key ideas/points underlined and highlighted. They may contain quotes, BUT BEWARE OF COPYING TOO MUCH NARRATIVE STRAIGHT FROM THE TEXT. Notes should be detailed enough to cover all the relevant material in a depth necessary for ‘A’ level study, but not too detailed to make revision arduous and overly time consuming. Notes can be made more concise by the use of abbreviations.

**Good notes are invaluable and they act as:**

- **A form of ‘external’ memory**, a kind of extension to the memory capacity of your mind – enabling you to have ready access to a far wider range of knowledge.
- **A symbol of progress**: notes provide you with evidence of the work you have done and so make an important contribution to your morale.
- **A means of pulling the course together**.

**Making notes on notes** is an effective form of revision. The action of noting concentrates your mind in revision, and allows you to further order ideas and
sharpen understanding.

**Filing notes** in an ordered fashion is a vital skill. Too many students lose notes or are unable to access material when they need it because of chaotic or non-existent filing systems. Treat yourself to some ring binders and box files!

**Absence:** As with any subject it is vitally important that you have a comprehensive, clear set of notes. Make sure if you are absent from school that you ask someone in your class for a copy of anything you have missed. This is your responsibility, not the teacher’s although of course your teacher will be more than willing to go through any problems once you have copied up missed work.

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**Resources**

**Computers**
Increasingly the ability to use computers is expected in both academic and every day life. There is no doubt that you are at a disadvantage if you are not computer literate to at least some degree of competency. There is a wealth of information out there and the internet offers huge scope for research for projects and for general interest. However, you should consider the source of information on the web – there is little censorship or vetting of material so how reliable is the source?

Finally, despite their significant advantages, computers present two distinct pitfalls to today’s student:

**Plagiarism:** Copying information from the internet without acknowledging it is plagiarism. You must cite your sources or reference them in a footnote, bibliography or appendix. Failure to do this may result in disqualification from individual modules or entire subjects. By all means, get information from the net but you must digest it and produce your own conclusions *in your own words as well as citing your sources.*

**Distraction:** Social media sites such as MSN, Facebook, Bebo etc are a central part of teenagers’ lives. Inevitably, they are also a distraction. It is impossible to concentrate on academic work if you have MSN ‘conversations’ and Facebook status updates popping up continuously. To avoid distraction, do not log in to these sites whilst you are studying; use them as a reward after a study session. They are enormous drains on your time!

**Textbooks**
Again the use of a textbook depends on the subject. In most subjects, the main use of your textbook is as a source of information and questions on specific topics. You may be asked to take notes directly from the textbook.
Library and Department Resources
You would also be well advised to read round your subject. This will help with such things as synoptic papers, coursework and research projects. The second half of this booklet has suggestions for further reading.

Past Papers
These in some ways are the most valuable study aid you have. After all they represent exactly what it is you will be asked to do in the exam. There is no substitute for practising past papers. Go to the exam boards’ websites and download the relevant materials.

It may well be worth adopting the following strategy:
1) identify main topic groups from the syllabus
2) work individually through these topics reading relevant notes, trying relevant examples from textbooks, asking teachers when unsure
3) once you are reasonably confident with that module try a past paper
4) the first ones you try need not be under exam conditions – it is then that your notes are most useful for referencing specific questions
5) Once you are reasonably confident try an exam under test conditions – set aside the allocated time, work in silence on your own and see how it goes. After the allotted time you will still need to go back and fill in any blanks with the help of friends or teachers but the experience of exam conditions, time pressure etc is extremely useful. It is also important to practise different topics and techniques mixed together – often half the battle is identifying which technique will solve the problem before actually going ahead and applying that technique.

One important point to remember is that quality comes before quantity. Yes, you need to practise plenty of past papers but don’t be tempted to rush through them missing out the bits you can’t do. There is absolutely no point in doing say ten past papers if you only do the bits that you could do already. You will have learnt very little. The learning does come partly by doing the paper and practising techniques but also in the identifying and sorting out of problems. That is the long, laborious and difficult part but it is the part that means you will do better next time round.

So the main advice is, the more past papers you complete and understand the better prepared you will be.

Teachers and homework
There is one huge misconception about homework which a surprising number of people still cling to. The misconception is this: the reason for completing my homework is so that the relevant teacher will not moan/contact my tutor/contact my parents/generally make my life unpleasant. That is not the reason for doing homework. There are two main points to homework: firstly for the teacher to check that you understand the work and have grasped the relevant concepts and secondly and equally importantly for you to practise required techniques, check you understand the work and have
grasped the relevant techniques.

Copying homework from someone else and passing work off as your own serves no purpose. Apart from the dishonesty of it, how can a teacher help when they are not seeing your own effort? Don’t fool yourself into thinking, ‘Oh yes I could probably have done that myself – I think I understand what I’m copying.’ If you understand it, then do it yourself. If you don’t understand, ask.

Be aware that what goes around comes around. Teachers will always be willing to help you as much as they can but bear in mind they are much more likely to go that extra mile with you if you meet them half-way. For example, someone who has done no work throughout the year, failed to hand in homework and generally been apathetic throughout may not be top of the popularity poll when they have a sudden panic the day before the exam and appear outside the staffroom asking for an intensive revision session. Think about it.

In the same vein, don’t be afraid to ask for help with homework – before it is due in. There is no point on the day homework is due saying ‘Oh, I couldn’t do these three questions.’ You should have contacted the teacher long before then. Similarly, writing the question number and no working does not constitute a reasonable attempt at a homework question.

Do not be under the misapprehension that the homework process finishes with the handing in of the piece of work. As with past papers, a crucially important part of the process is sorting out mistakes you have made and learning from them.

To conclude, there are three general golden rules. They are obvious and yet surprisingly rarely adhered to:

1) **Slow and steady wins the race – every time.** By that I mean study little and often – from day one. There is nothing worse than playing catch up and, believe me, although it might have worked at GCSE the ‘I’ll do no work throughout the year and then make a huge revision effort just before the exams’ technique simply will not work at A-level. Ask the current Year 13 if you don’t believe me.

2) **Divide your time fairly between subjects.** It is easy to become bogged down in a particular subject if there is a test/exam/project looming in that particular area. You must endeavour however to keep the other subjects going at the same time. No doubt there will be some weekly variations in the division of your time between subjects but it is vitally important to keep your head above water in all of them at the same time. All too often students get themselves into a ‘Catch-22’ situation of leaving some subjects, trying to catch up and in the process neglecting the original subject and so on. It is a thankless situation and one to be avoided at all cost. A little forward planning
can go a long way.

3) Seek advice and assistance before things get out of control. We are here to help. Whether it be subject teacher, tutor, Mrs Thomas or Mr Clarke – see someone. Let us know you are having difficulties and we will endeavour to help you form a strategy for sorting them out. There are very rarely problems that are insurmountable provided you are willing to work through them.

Group Discussions

In the Sixth Form you will probably find there is more opportunity for group discussion than was the case at GCSE.

Group discussion is important in:

• Helping you articulate ideas and arguments in a clear coherent fashion
• Building self confidence
• Aiding group learning, as you may have novel ideas or a new approach which add a different perspective to a topic
• Learning to appreciate the views of others and the dangers of dogma.

How to make group discussions work

1. Contribute …throw caution to the wind and join in! Everyone has something valid to contribute and you have just as much right to take part in discussions as anyone else.
2. Contributions can be simple … they don’t have to be complex and brilliant.
3. In any discussion you may occasionally grow confused – and unsure of what exactly the discussion is about. Don’t sit quietly by, but instead ask for clarification.
4. If a discussion is pre-planned, then prepare for it! Argument backed up with logic and factual content will always prevail over “hot air”.
5. Show tolerance towards the views of others even if you disagree with them. Many issues are so complex that there is never just one right answer.

Essay Writing

There are six key steps:

1. Think about the essay title
   In particular look out for command verbs such as explain and evaluate which will set the parameters of your answer. Underline key words and ensure that all aspects of the question are being addressed. Before you begin to prepare for an essay you must have a clear idea of what the question wants, and if necessary seek clarification from your teacher.

2. Gather together material for the essay
   Look back through your class notes to find out what is relevant to the
question set. Find out from your teacher what extra reading you should do. Look out for other sources (eg newspapers, Internet, CD Rom), which may be relevant. Using relevant material taken from sources beyond basic textbooks impresses examiners. Without thorough research, you will not be familiar with the range of arguments and depth of supporting detail necessary to score highly.

3. **Get some ideas down on paper**

   By writing notes for your essay, you have already begun the process of getting ideas on to paper. However, up to this point your main emphasis has been on getting hold of what other writers have to say. Once you have completed the gathering together of material, you have to switch to thinking in terms of what you are going to say. The best way to approach this is by **BRAINSTORMING**, jotting down a whole series of thoughts relating to the title. Brainstorming allows you to trap some of the ideas floating around in your mind.

4. **Organise material and draw up an essay plan**

   You need to start dividing up your brainstorming ideas from (3) into some sort of order from which a logical and structured argument can be formed. This could take the form of dividing points up into for or against a particular viewpoint, or by listing points out under certain subheadings which will form the text of individual paragraphs in your answer. (For example, a question asking what factors affect the distribution of population in Brazil could be divided up on a one factor per paragraph basis.)

   How you actually construct an essay does vary from one subject to another, and detailed advice is best left to subject teachers. Suffice to say most essays should:
   • Have an introduction, outlining the topic to be discussed. Good introductions often impose a **structure** on the subsequent essay.
   • Be relevant to the question set. Cut out any irrelevancy or background narrative not directly related to the essay title.
   • Have a logical and developed argument.
   • Have a conclusion which summarises the main points (arguments in your essay) and directly answers the question set.

5. **Write the essay**

   This is best done in one go, as this will help the flow of your argument. Do not spend too long worrying about the detail of sentences, for while you are writing you are too close to the words to make reliable judgments about them. It is easy to waste time fiddling about with small changes when a fresh run at the piece might show a useful way of recasting a whole sentence or paragraph.

6. **Review your essay**

   In doing so, check the following:
   i) Are your spelling, punctuation and use of English accurate?
ii) Do the sentences work; that is, do they make sense? Even at Advanced level, many candidates produce awkward sentences which have too many sub-clauses or lack a verb!

iii) Do the divisions into paragraphs work? Do the breaks feel as though they come at the right place when the focus of the discussion shifts, for example, as you move from one factor to another?

iv) Have you given sufficient explanation and illustration such that your argument has credibility?

v) Does the argument follow? Does it make sense as you move from point to point?

vi) And the most important check of all, have you answered the question in the title? Your answer should be relevant and structured rather than “a tell me everything you know about….” narrative.

**Effective Study and Revision Techniques:**

**A Summary**

There is no miracle approach to Advanced level success or academic panacea for intellectual woes. However, it is possible to “work smarter not harder!”

Here are a few ways of getting the most out of your revision and study.

**1. Get yourself organised**

- Make sufficient time for academic study outside of the classroom. You should be spending approximately four hours per subject each week.
- Don’t let study periods in school drift away without getting anything done. Year 12 students at Crickhowell have an average of four free lessons per week and Year 13 students have an average of nine free lessons per week. How do you use this time?
  - Meet all your deadlines and do not fall behind (especially for coursework and projects)
  - Set up a quiet place to study (at home; the library) and avoid distractions.
  - Address extra curricular dilemmas, eg part-time job versus study. As exams approach you must give academic work increased priority but occasional relaxation is vital!

**2. Reading**

- Read around the subject (daily newspaper; Economist; New Scientist; Internet).
- Read other people’s work … (after you’ve done your own!).
- Ask for help if you do *not* understand what you read.
- Use reading as a source of technical words and jargon for your own work.
- Summarise what you read in your notes.
- Do not copy other students’ work or plagiarise.

**3. Note Taking**

- Clear and concise notes are best remembered.
- Highlight key ideas and terms.
- Summarise your own notes into a series of key points as part of your
revision programme.
- Make sure you have a complete set of notes (Sod’s Law ... says the examination will always focus on your weak spots!).
- Keep your notes safe and well organised.

4. Preparing for Exams
- Pull the whole course together (get a syllabus and do not compartmentalize information).
- Start revising early enough (ie months before the exam!)
- Try to keep a revision timetable.
- Change revision topics regularly to avoid boredom (but ensure thorough revision of all areas!)
- Revise actively by summarising notes onto cards or into diagrams; (don’t stare blankly at your notes or copy out repetitively!).
- Revise in approximately 45 minute sessions (...your attention span!).
- Practise past questions and papers.
- Try to think up likely exam questions for yourself (but beware of question spotting!).
- Talk about the material you are revising (bore parents, friends, relatives, etc).

5. As Exam Day Approaches
- Ease off your revision (you need to be mentally alert for the exam, not a walking zombie!).
- Revise during the day so that your mind is used to working in examination hours. You must be at your most alert at 9am not 11.30pm!
- If anxiety sets in talk to parents/tutors. (Breathing exercises, meditation or a GP may help.)
- Check examination arrangements (twice!) – time, place, etc.
- On the day:
  i) Don’t attempt any last minute revision, it will only disturb your carefully stored ideas.
  ii) Arrive in good time.
  iii) Don’t let other candidates disturb you. Remain aloof if you need to.
  iv) Make sure you have the necessary equipment for the exam (black pen, calculator, books!)

6. In the Exam Itself
- Keep calm at all times (Kipling’s ”If”).
- Read the instructions on the front page.
- Read the questions.
- Read the instructions (again) and find the questions you have prepared for.
- As you tackle a question:
  - Examine the wording carefully
  - Very quickly list some relevant points from the course
  - Move back and forth between the question and your list as you sketch an outline plan for your answer
  - Take the time to plan your answer before you start writing
- Everything you write should be relevant to the specific question asked.
- Draw up a time plan for the exam and STICK to it.
- First impressions count! Good introductions/early answers will impress the examiner and put him/her into a charitable mood.
- Write legibly and in a clear style using relevant terminology.
- Express complex ideas in short sentences.
- Structure essays with an introduction, a logically developed argument and a conclusion which all answer the question set.

CONCLUSION

Everyone teaching you hopes that you will not only succeed academically but also enjoy your next two years in the Sixth Form, developing in every aspect of school life. Remember that, in the end, what you get out of the Sixth Form will depend on what you put into it. Our aim is to see Sixth Form students leave as well-rounded young adults, who will make outstanding citizens in society.
Art & Design

The ability to engage in independent study is an essential and integral part of art and design at AS and A level. Candidates studying art and design are required to produce a coursework portfolio which is unique and individually personal. The coursework portfolio is developed from starting points largely determined by the candidate. The nature of this individual and personal coursework means that candidates must be able to develop their work through sustained and focused investigations into their chosen area of study. They must present informed, meaningful responses that demonstrate analytical and critical understanding of contextual and other sources, making connections that inform the development of their own work.

Candidate need to work beyond the constraints of the classroom and independent study may take place in a variety of ways.

* Visits to galleries, museums and craft workshops: These may be small and local or nationally important. This allows candidates to experience works of art, craft and design at first hand and can form a key role in developing their own work.

* Establishing contact with practicing artists and designers; an important element in the ART 3 A level portfolio that can help foster a greater understanding and subject awareness.

* Research through use of books and the internet. Candidates must be prepared to research widely and independently and to record the results through written analysis and practical responses.

* Practical exploration of a subject through drawing and experimentation. Candidates can never do too much drawing. Personal sketch/work books form an essential element of all coursework and should be developed outside the classroom.
Design and Technology
A2 and AS Level

There is a hand written list of publications available, which has been circulated to students on the ADT course. It would be advantageous to read as much as possible in addition to the usual studies. Most of the titles listed are in the School Library.

Also included is a planning sheet to show where students should be on the course during the year.

In addition, pupils should also refer to Designers / Inventors such as James Dyson, Ross Lovegrove, Trevor Bayliss etc. so that they can monitor current trends, developments, design issues and so on.

Newspapers, television programmes (Science, Construction, Engineering), magazine articles, trade journals can also be useful sources of information for issues such as materials development. Engineering practice, new discoveries and topics for discussion in class.
Biology

As a department we expect pupils to be studying independently. To this end we provide pupils with the latest textbook (which includes access to extra online resources) and assume that pupils can access the internet either at home or in school.

Obviously if pupils are given homework we expect it to be completed to a high standard by the due date.

As well as homework we assume that pupils are spending at least 30 minutes a night reading over their notes from the day’s lesson, checking their understanding of the concepts taught and when necessary reading the appropriate parts of their textbook or researching the internet to help with understanding.

Furthermore, those pupils who revise thoroughly for the internal test that are set throughout the term always do better in the ‘proper’ AS level exams. Again this is a form of independent learning that should be encouraged. Pupils should, at regular intervals as sections of work are completed, be summarising those topics. The summary could be lists on lined paper, they might be spider diagrams on A4 or A3 blank pages. The important thing is that the process of summarising helps with revision as well as producing a shorter document to learn.

Pupils’ who get into the habit of regular independent working find it far easier to ‘knuckle down’ to their revision when we get close to the AS modular exams.
Chemistry

Due to the nature of many of the courses now taught it is important that students recognise the need for a degree of independent learning. This can manifest itself in many ways.

- Students should know which exam board is being studied and have access to or printed off the specification. (follow link below) [http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?subject=13&level=21](http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?subject=13&level=21)

- Have a copy of the relevant revision guide (exam board specific), this often contains examiners tips. CH1, CH2, CH4, CH5 (follow link below) [http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?subject=13&level=21](http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?subject=13&level=21)

| [http://www.chemguide.co.uk/](http://www.chemguide.co.uk/) | [http://www.s-cool.co.uk/alevel/chemistry.html](http://www.s-cool.co.uk/alevel/chemistry.html) | These are many of the useful websites that can support students’ learning |

There are also many different text books which are available for reference both within the department and in the library.

The library also has copies of The New Scientist which can be a source of useful information, particularly regarding the How Science Works part of the specification.
**English**

**Your own reading**
Follow your literary nose. Read what you like, read widely – different genres. Look at the reading list you have been given. Look at other writing by your own set writers.

**Context**
A knowledge of the political, historical, religious and literary background to your texts will enrich your understanding and is a specific assessment objective.

**The Internet**
You will find a lot of information about the context of your books and critical opinions on the internet. Read only what you understand and is helpful.
Be selective.

**Writers’ Lives**
Many writers dig into their own life for their material. A knowledge of this can be significant but is not always the case e.g. we know little of Shakespeare’s life and it does not affect our study of his plays.

**Newspapers**
All broadsheet/quality papers have cultural sections, usually at the weekend. You can keep up to date with new books, films and music by reading these.

**E-Mag**
This is a colourfully presented magazine with a range of articles aimed specifically at English ‘A’ Level students. It is important reading for anyone considering studying English at university. See the librarian or English staff.

**Set Texts**
Your set texts have articles and notes included. Keep up to date by going through these before/after each lesson. It will reinforce what you have done in the lesson.

**Study Guides**
These are tailored to the need of ‘A’ level students and provide a valuable addition to your own text. York Advanced Notes, Penguin/Macmillan Masterguides, Cambridge contexts in Literature.
French

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES for AS and A2

www.yahoo.fr

www.phosphore.com - Le site des 15-25 ans

www.20minutes.fr
www.lemonde.fr
www.lefigaro.fr
www.arte.fr

www.tv5.org -
Le site de TV5 chaîne internationale de télévision francophone: Les émissions, les programmes, l’information en continu, la météo, la musique, ...
Jeux et divertissements
Dictionnaire
Météo internationale
Info
information en continu de l’AFP
Langue Française
Cinéma
Informations

Okapi
www.boutique.bayardweb.com
Le magazine des ados ouverts au monde. ... Okapi, le magazine des années collège. Abonnement 6 mois 11 numéros

www.languagesonline.org.uk
www.zut.org.uk
Geography

AS Geography:
Unit G1 - Physical
There are detailed notes, resources and activities to support the Tectonic and Hydrological Hazards section of this course available at www.geogonline.org.uk.
Students will also need to undertake an individual piece of research into an hydrological issue which needs to be written up as a coursework folio. This investigation will be the focus of a question within the final examination.

Unit G2 – Human
There are detailed notes, resources and activities to support the Population section of this course available at www.geogonline.org.uk.
Students should complete the activities in support of the actual lesson content.
Students should also consider the good and bad points of each kind of method of presenting information that they come across in lessons. They should make notes about these. Examples include choropleths, dot distribution maps, pie charts and proportional circles, scattergraphs as well statistical measures such as mean, median and mode and Spearman Rank correlation coefficient. They will be set exercises that involve the use of all such techniques.
Students will also need to undertake an individual piece of research into an issue of urban deprivation and regeneration which needs to be written up as a coursework folio. This investigation will be the focus of a question within the final examination.

A2 Geography
Students must complete a piece of individual research into a chosen topic by Christmas. As well as completing a full range of activities designed to reinforce the learning aims of actual lessons. Full support is available online at www.geogonline.org.uk.
German

**GENERAL**

www.goethe.de
fantastic German resource with translations available/ video clips and sound files- an absolute must

www.sowieso.de
very accessible website aimed at young people. Current themes/ trends/ world news/forum

Newspapers and magazines
Berliner Zeitung (BZ)
http://www.berlinonline.de/
Bild-Zeitung http://www.bild.de/
Bravo http://www.bravo.de/
Bravo Sport http://www.bravosport.de/
Bunte http://www.bunte.de/
Der Spiegel http://www.spiegel.de/
Die Tageszeitung http://www.taz.de/
Die Welt http://www.welt.de
Die Zeit http://www.zeit.de/
Facts online magazine http://facts.ch (includes occasional English texts)
Focus http://www.focus.de/
JUMA http://www.juma.de/
Junge Welt http://www.jungewelt.de
Profil http://www.news.at/profil/
Stern http://www.stern.de/
Süddeutsche Zeitung http://www.sueddeutsche.de/
Zeitung in der Schule http://www.zis.de/

Television channels
ARD http://www.ard.de/
ZDF http://www.zdf.de/
3sat http://www.3sat.com
Deutsche Welle http://www.dwelle.de/
news broadcasts http://www.tagesschau.de/
OR http://www.tagesthemen.de/
RTL http://www.rtl.de/
Sport 1 http://www.sport1.de/
WDR http://www.wdr.de/
http://www.arte.de (This bi-lingual channel and website [www.arte.fr] is useful for students who also study French
Other websites of regional stations can be found by searching with Google, e.g.

NDR, MDR, RBB, BR (Bayern), HR (Hessen) etc.

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Towns and cities in German speaking countries all have their own websites, for example:
Berlin http://www.berlin.de/
Munich http://www.muenchen-tourist.de/index.html
Salzburg http://www.salzburg.at
Vienna http://www.wien.at

Sites on tourism with links to places of interest, activities etc.:
Austria http://www.austria-tourism.at/
Germany http://www.deutschland-tourismus.de (includes podcasts)
Switzerland http://www.switzerlandvacation.ch
Portal with maps and links to the websites of individual Bundesländer
http://www.acu.edu/academics/cas/fl/german/bundeslaender/bundeslaender.htm

General search engines return slightly different results depending on whether the German (.de) or English site (.com or .co.uk) is called. It is therefore worth logging in to the German sites:
http://www.de.altavista.com (sic!)
http://www.yahoo.de/
http://www.dino-online.de
http://www.web.de/
http://www.fireball.de/
http://www.t-online.de/
http://www.ddr-suche.de/
Health and Social Care

The AS course will focus on the needs of individuals and the techniques and professional services aimed at meeting those needs. Students will be assessed on:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Communication in care settings
- Health and well being

The A2 course will develop the AS content through addressing the factors affecting and issues involved in service delivery. Students will be assessed on:

- Service provision and practitioner roles
- Understanding human behaviour
- An ability to draw together aspects of these areas in a variety of contexts.

Due to the nature of the course the students need to:

- Take responsibility for their own learning
- Collect information using a variety of research methods and present their findings in an appropriate manner
- Communicate effectively with a wide range of individuals
- Apply knowledge gained to specific work related situations and internal/external assessments

AS this A level is a topical and ever evolving area of study, it is imperative that students are aware of current developments in the fields of health and social care and education. An interest and knowledge of current affairs, the role of the Government and its policies at national and regional levels is essential and should be accessed via a selection of media sources.

School service, voluntary roles in and outside school or paid employment, where there is interaction with a wide range of individuals, will enhance effective communication skills and raise awareness of the needs of others.

There are numerous generic resources recommended for this course (details of which can be found in the WJEC GCE AS Level Teacher's Guide [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)). The following books are particularly useful:

- **Folens** Applied Health and Social Care  Fisher et al ISBN 978 1 84303 840 5
- **Heinemann** AVCE Advanced Health and Social Care Editor Neil Moonie ISBN 0 435 45589 3
- **Heinemann** GCE A2 Health and Social Care for AQA Editor Neil Moonie ISBN 978 0 435352 92 9
- **Philip Allen** AQA AS Health and Social Care  Richard Smithson ISBN 1 84489 408 8
- **Philip Allen** AQA A2 Health and Social Care  Richard Smithson ISBN 978 1 84489 600 4
- **Hodder** A Level Health and Social Care Hilary Thompson et al ISBN 0 340 77547 5
- **Hodder and Stoughton** Human Growth and Development Hilary Thompson and Carolyn Meggitt ISBN 0 340 68362 7
- **Hodder Arnold** BTEC National Health and Social Care Alison Hetherington et al ISBN 978 0 340 95862 9
History

The A Level History course follows a two pronged approach.

**A Period Study** –
Year 12 – Aspects of the History of Europe, c.1878 – 1989
Year 13 – International Relations, c. 1918 – 1945

**An In Depth Study**
Parliamentary Reform and People Protest 1830 – 1848. This also includes course work in Year 13.

It is important to keep abreast of the new ‘views’ of history which constantly emerge, so reading any books by the following authors should help with your understanding and ‘word power’: Anthony Beevoir, Richard Overy, Ian Kershaw. Eric Hobsbawm, A.J.P. Taylor

* You can also just dip into their books and read a few relevant chapters, if you feel daunted by the whole book!*

Also – buying or taking out a subscription for the BBC History Magazine will keep you informed about new discoveries, ideas, exhibitions, publications and websites etc.

There are so many History websites out there, we would welcome your recommendations. Reading newspapers and watching programmes such as Question Time on BBC One would also be beneficial.

**Book List**

Asa Briggs
Norman Gash
Eric Evans
E.J. Hobsbawm
Maxine Berg
D. Gareth Evans
David Williams
Ed. By Trevor Herbert &
Gareth Elwyn Jones
Gwyn A. Williams
Joe Finn
Dorothy Thompson
William Lovett
R.G. Gammage
Marx & Engels
Frederick Engels

People and Protest, Wales 1815 – 1880
When Was Wales?
Chartists and Chartism
Study of Chartism
My Life and Struggles 1876
A History of the Chartist Movement 1854
The Communist Manifesto
The Conditions of the Working Classes in England 1844

**New**

John Davies
A.N. Wilson
Niall Ferguson
John Humphries
Simon Schama

A History of Wales (1990)
The Victorians
Empire
The man from the Alamo (why the Welsh Chartist Uprising of 1839 ended in a massacre)
A History of Britain 1776 - 2000
Novels written at the time:

**Dickens**
Oliver Twist (Workhouse)
David Copperfield
Hard Times
Our Mutual Friend

**Elizabeth Gaskell**
Wives and Daughters
Mary Barton (Cholera)
North and South

**George Elliot**
Middlemarch (1832)
Mill on the Floss

**Modern Historical Novels**

**Alexander Cordell**
Rape of the Fair Country (Industrial Revolution)
Hosts of Rebecca
Song of the Earth
Requiem for a Patriot (John Frost / Chartism)
This Proud and Savage Land
The Fire People (Merthyr)

**Saul David**
Zulu Hart
Law -AS

In addition to attendance at lessons and completion of homework it is essential that pupils use a range of resources in order to acquire further knowledge about the topics studied as well as related topics. This enables pupils to gain both a broader and deeper understanding of the course and reinforces what has been learned in class.
Suggested resources include the following –

Textbooks
There is a good range of high quality textbooks on the English/Welsh legal system. Some of these are available in the classroom or school library. The best titles include:
- Elliot & Quinn “English Legal System” (available in TR)
- Jacqueline Martin “The English Legal System” (available in TR)
- Slapper & Kelly “The English Legal System”

Other Books
There are also books available in the school library that are specific to one aspect of the legal system –
- JAG Griffith “The Politics of the Judiciary”
- Joshua Rozenberg “The Search for Justice”
- Hogan, Seago & Bennet “A Level Law” – sources of law section only
- Smith & Keenan “English Law” – sources of law section only
- Ward “A Critical Introduction to European Law”
- Jacqueline Martin: A – Z Law handbook – a dictionary of legal terms

The Law Review
This magazine is specifically targeted at A level Law pupils and includes up to date information on recent developments in the law as well as model answers to exam questions and other articles. This review is strongly recommended and copies can be ordered through the school at the discount price of £9.95

The News
News items on legal developments can be accessed via a number of sources – BBC News homepage, the TV or quality newspapers (The Times is available in the library – Tuesday has a “Law Supplement”) it is recommended that pupils access one of these sources on a twice weekly basis in order to keep up with legal developments.

Web-sites
All pupils have been given a list of legal websites. Among the most useful are –
- www.cps.gov
- www.justice.gov
- www.tribunals.gov.uk
- www.parliament.uk
Reading List

There is no set text for this course but the following textbook is an excellent resource for the contract law element of the course –
Eliott & Quinn: “Contract Law”. (There is a class set available for pupils)

Textbooks
There are many other books that can be used for different aspects of the course. Some of these are available for reference from the classroom or the library. The following list provides a selection of titles –

Leder & Shears: “Consumer Law”
Lowe & Woodruffe: “Consumer Law and Practice”
Key Facts “Consumer Law” (a revision guide)
Templeman & Holloway: “Commercial Law”
Blackstone’s Statutes on Commercial & Consumer Law
Miller & Harvey: “Consumer and Trading Law: Cases and Materials”
Consumer Law (Nutshells)

Office of Fair Trading
The OFT publishes a variety of leaflets and booklets relevant to the course. They can be obtained free of charge. Examples include -
Misleading Advertising Regulations
Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Guide
There is a stock of these kept for reference in TR.

Law Reports Websites
Recent cases involving consumer law can be accessed via the following websites –
www.lawreports.co.uk (“WLR Daily”)
www.the-times.co.uk

Other Websites
Relevant information can be accessed on the following websites –
www.compactlaw.co.uk (information on consumer rights)
www.of.t.gov.uk
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/advice (consumer information)
www.lawcom.gov (the Law Commission)
www.parliament.uk
www.which.co.uk/advice (consumer credit)
www.holidaytravelwatch.net (Rights of holidaymakers)
www.europa.eu.int/comm/consumers (EU consumer affairs)
Mathematics

Guidelines for Self-Supported Study

- For all study, find a quiet area with no distractions. Give yourself a reasonable time limit and ensure you are comfortable. Limit any distractions and make sure you are well equipped. Organisation is paramount.
- Identify carefully any areas and topics that you may have problems with. Don’t waste time; limit the area of study for that period. Don’t make it too broad an area. Avoid studying too many areas at once - build up your skills.
- Make notes of things you need to do.
- Work through as many and as varied problems as you can to practise the skills that you have learned.
- Jot down the key points, formulae etc and place prominently to remind you. You may wish to write these as a mathematics dictionary to help you.
- Précis the notes you have been given. You will retain a lot of information and obtain a clearer understanding in this way.
- Try the questions yourself first and use answers given to you wisely.
- Read around the topic as far as possible. There are a wealth of reference texts in the mathematics department. Remember to use them in the department and replace them for others to use.
- Websites to check out include [www.examsolutions.co.uk](http://www.examsolutions.co.uk), [www.MathsRevision.net](http://www.MathsRevision.net), [www.mathcentre.ac.uk](http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk), [www.scool.co.uk](http://www.scool.co.uk) and many more.
- Talk to others about the topics. Set up a study group.
- Organisation is your key to success. Always use enough room and work out questions in full. Ensure figures are completely legible.
- Make sure you can overlap the skills learned in both the Pure and applied units and those from GCSE. They are not mutually exclusive!
- Make sure you know what is required. Plan ahead. Know the examination dates etc. We sit the WJEC examinations. Be a regular visitor to their website. [www.wjec.co.uk](http://www.wjec.co.uk)
- Ensure your calculator is in the correct mode for the questions you are answering.

**REMEMBER: It is okay to find things hard. It is what you do from then on that counts!**
**AS MUSIC**

- Research background information on the following composers/performers. (biography, compositions, discography and general achievements where applicable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUSICIAN</th>
<th>SET WORKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o J.S. BACH</td>
<td>(BRANDENBURG NO.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o L.V. BEETHOVEN</td>
<td>(5TH SYMPHONY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o F. MENDELSSOHN</td>
<td>(VIOLIN CONCERTO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o DUKE ELLINGTON</td>
<td>(TAKE THE ‘A’ TRAIN/BLACK AND TAN FANTASY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o QUEEN</td>
<td>(KILLER/BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o THE BEATLES</td>
<td>(YESTERDAY/HEY JUDE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Choose 1 piece composed or performed by the above composers (NOT including the set works mentioned above) and write a short analysis of each – approx 1 side of A4.

- Revise any music theory knowledge – if possible use ABRSM theory workbooks (grades 1-5).

- Regularly compose short melodies (8, 12, 24 bars) and harmonise each one 3 different ways.

- If you are a classical musician – listen to and investigate guitar/drum based music – particularly how to read TAB percussion notation. Then attempt to compose for guitar or drums.

- If you are a pop/rock/jazz musician (particularly drummers/guitarists) revise your standard notation, choose an orchestral instrument and attempt compose for this new instrument.

- Listen to as many different genres of music as possible – Radio 3 is particularly good for less mainstream classical music.

- Practise your instrument regularly – choose possibilities of repertoire for your practical recital by the October of your AS year and have them checked by Mrs Callow as soon as possible.

- Compile a glossary of musical terms – this should be on-going throughout the year.

- Utilise varied resources – internet, libraries etc. Do remember that when using the internet verifying the reliability of the facts is extremely important.
Performing Arts

It is very important for all students embarking on the AS level course in Performing Arts at Crickhowell High School to understand the vocational nature of the course. In Units 1, 2 and 3, your knowledge and understanding of the performing arts industries will be called upon. You will need to look at what is happening within the performing arts industries locally, nationally and internationally. As this is the case, there are a number of things you can do at the beginning of, and, indeed, throughout the course to keep up to date with what is happening in the world of performing arts.

All of your notes can be made and kept in your Performing Arts folders.

Locally

The venues

- Find out what is happening locally. Use a 20 mile radius. Examine and read the programme of events for Theatr Brycheiniog, The Borough, The Beaufort in Brynmawr, the Metropole in Abertillery, The Riverside and the Dolman in Newport and the Wyeside in Builth Wells. Use the internet or the current brochure.
- Join a mailing list for one of the above and decide which performances you would like to go to see.
- What’s happening in Cardiff over the next few months? Which are the performing arts venues (there are five major ones) and what sort of productions do they mount? What’s coming up and what would you like to see?

Courses and workshops

- What sort of workshops are on offer in your area?
  List and describe these courses in your folders.
- Which one are you going to choose to do?
  You need to join a weekly performance workshop to supplement your work in the lessons. Research them, apply and join.

Nationally

One of the earliest and most useful things for you to find out about what is happening in this country is to become acquainted with the performing arts industries; and the best way to do this is to read the industry newspaper, ‘The Stage.’

Reading and research task: Go to the library and read ‘The Stage’. Search for the articles that interest you or the articles about your own performance specialism. Read about current productions (theatre, film, TV, opera, ballet, dance, music and so on) and get a thorough appreciation of what sort of productions are currently being mounted or are running at the moment. What is happening in the West End? In London? In the National Theatre and the RSC? In the Donmar? Find out!

Follow-on writing task: Learn the names of performers and specialists in your field and research them and their lives. How did they get started in the performing arts, and what are they famous for now? Use Google, other internet search engines, or
the books in the library. **Write a 500 word report about your chosen performer in your own words.**

**Research and writing task:** Research a particular production or performance that interests you, or one that you have seen, and find out what the production process has been to put on that performance. **Write a 500 word report in your own words.**

**Research and writing task:** Acquaint yourself with the Performing Arts section of the library. Choose one of the books which discusses the relevant theory of your chosen performance discipline. Take time, sit quietly and read it. Select a few chapters and, after assimilating the information, **write a 1000 word report** about how you think this theory could inform and enhance **your own practice and performance.**

An additional reading list can be found on the Performing Arts department website, but it is much better if you follow the advice above, get yourself into the library, see what we have there, and begin the background reading and research that should be central, essential and sustained and maintained as you go through the year with us in the Performing Arts department.

Alison Maguire
Physical Education

There are a number of resources on the school ‘Home access’ site in the ‘Learning resources’ folder.

There is also a brand new online learning resource called ‘Kerboodle’ which pupils are being given access codes to. This will include videos and interactive activities to reinforce the topics being covered in school. Students will be given online assignments to complete via kerboodle to give an indication as to the level of understanding of topics covered.
# Physics

## Web sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web site</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absorb Physics</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.absorblearning.com/">http://www.absorblearning.com/</a></td>
<td>Absorb Physics is an interactive course. It offers a huge amount of interactivity - ranging from simple animations that show hidden concepts, to powerful models that allow flexible experimentation. Absorb Physics is divided into units, so you can follow the course all the way through or use the units individually. Username: student4607  Password: crickhowell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Physics</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.schoolphysics.co.uk/">http://www.schoolphysics.co.uk/</a></td>
<td>This website is for both students and teachers of Physics whether studied as a single subject or as part of a combined science course. The site is particularly useful for those in the UK studying GCSE Physics and A level Physics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WJEC</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?subject=96&amp;level=21">http://www.wjec.co.uk/index.php?subject=96&amp;level=21</a></td>
<td>WJEC A Level Physics website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Useful text books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Physics for A level</td>
<td>Several copies are in the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge OCR Advanced Sciences</td>
<td>See AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Resources on school network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtual physical laboratory&lt;br&gt;Virtual Physical Laboratory has approximately 220 interactive experiments which have been used successfully in the classroom by teachers as well as by pupils individually. The programs have been written to support the specifications of both the Physics GCSE, AS and A2.</td>
<td>All programs/science/virtual physical laboratory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
R.S.

Suggested reading for those brilliant grades:-

**Judaism**
Cohn-Sherbok, Dan - A Popular Dictionary of Judaism – good for looking up any terms you do not understand.
Pilkington – Teach Yourself Judaism.
Cohn-Sherbok – Holocaust Theology
Elie Wiesel – Night – Elie Wiesel is a Holocaust survivor who entered Auschwitz as a teenager. He is now an atheist who rages against God.

**Websites**
Judaism 101 – good general website of information.
[www.jchron.co.uk](http://www.jchron.co.uk) - the Jewish Chronicle on line highlights issues confronting British Jews.
[www.jhom.com](http://www.jhom.com) – Jewish news source , Jewish life in America etc
[www.jewisheritage.com](http://www.jewisheritage.com) – Jewish belief, history, culture etc

There are obviously many more sites that could be useful.

**Buddhism**
Denise Cush – Buddhism
Clarke and Thompson – Buddhism
Clive Errikker – Teach Yourself Buddhism

[www.dharmanet.org](http://www.dharmanet.org)
All of these books and more are in our Library.
Welsh

Independent Learning

We live in an anglicised area therefore you **must** increase your exposure to the language.

To improve your listening skills and improve general vocabulary listen to Welsh radio. Radio Acen f.m. is specifically for Welsh learners. Log onto w.w.w.Radioacen.co.uk. Here you can listen to and read the news and tune into various radio programmes. You can subscribe to the Acen magazine for Welsh learners which would help develop reading skills and vocabulary.

In L2 I have a large collection of Welsh magazines + short novels. Most have been written for Welsh learners. Please feel free to borrow these at any time.

You **must** get into the habit of watching Welsh t.v. programmes. I recommend **at least** two programmes per week. Make a diary of those you watch and write a brief description of their content.