

THE SENIOR PHASE
BRECHIN HIGH SCHOOL



COURSE CHOICE PROCESS

A GUIDE FOR S4, S5 AND S6 PUPILS

Session 2017-18

S4 to S6 Course Choices

Our aim is to ensure you child pick a course choice which they are happy with, and that will maximise their achievement in order to give the best chances when they leave us.

This booklet contains information which will help with the course choice process.

You should be thinking about what you want to do when you leave school. Select a course choice that will increase your chances. If you are not yet sure what you want to do, then pick the subjects that interest you, or that you excel at.

Into S4: Pupils will take English and Maths + four other options. This is a 'free choice' and a reserve option should be put down in case we need to use it. It is highly recommended to pursue subjects that you selected in S3. We would be hoping that in S4 most people would pass 6 National 5 exams.

Into S5: Pupils select 5 subjects, this should be your best 5 subjects in S4, this will help you to maximise your attainment. You can also choose 2 electives (2 periods each). We encourage pupils to aim for 5 Higher passes. At this stage we do not allow pupils to take 'Crash Highers' (that is, sitting a higher with no experience of National 5 course).

Into S6: Similar options to S5, pupils should be increasing their experience, or adding any subjects that are missing, due to a change in career plan. We will support Advanced Highers and Crash Highers with study periods.

On the website you will find:

- Copies of the course choice sheet
- Descriptions for All Courses
- Descriptions for all Electives

The rest of this booklet discusses your options for when you leave school. It is important to consider this advice as you complete our course choice.

Options at the end of S4/S5 - session 2016 - 2017

At the end of four years of secondary education, pupils can take one of three routes to their future careers:-

You can leave school in May

If your sixteenth birthday falls before 30th September, you may leave school at the end of May. You have several choices if you decide to leave with your National qualifications:-

1. Employment - You may be able to find a job which perhaps needs very few qualifications and requires little training which will be given in the job, e.g. factory work, some sales assistant jobs, some farm work or office work, etc.,
2. Apprenticeships
3. A College Course - A full time course at a College of Further Education is another route leading to many jobs or apprenticeships, e.g. hairdresser, hotel receptionist, nursery nurse, clerk, chef/cook, etc., as well as courses leading to Higher Education, (Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diploma (HND)). Again, the entrance qualifications vary greatly and depend on the type of course. Check with your Head of House and the Careers Officer, and with the College itself.

Sadly, unemployment is also a possibility. If this should happen to you, it is vital that you register as unemployed at the local Careers Office and keep in touch with the Careers Service. They are in touch with local employers and know about the job vacancies as well as college courses or apprenticeship opportunities for which you might be eligible.

You can leave at Christmas in S5

If your sixteenth birthday falls between 1st October and the end of February, you must return to school. You are not eligible to leave until the Christmas leaving date.

Pupils who have decided that they will leave school in December will be provided with a broad based course and work experience is also arranged for most pupils.

Each year, a few full-time places are available at Angus College for suitably qualified Christmas leavers. Pupils are allowed to embark on these courses from the start of the new session, although they remain pupils on the roll of Brechin High School. PCS staff have details of the courses available.

Whether you get anything out of your final term at school depends on your attitude to school and work. Take advantage of the opportunities available to Christmas leavers. The skills and qualifications you can acquire will help you to get a job or a Skill-Seekers placement when you leave school.

You can stay on at school beyond 16

WHY? There are lots of answers to this question from good answers like, 'I need a good set of Highers to get into the job I'm interested in', to poor answers like, 'My friends are staying on and going to University'.

Pupils and parents attach, rightly, great importance to Highers (National 6). Most departments say that a Grade A or B at National 5 is required to have realistic chances of passing Higher Grade. If your grade is C then you may not have covered important areas and skills necessary for tackling 'H' Grade. You should discuss your chances with your teachers - they will give you good advice based on their experience. As a general guide, our advice is to think very long and hard about coming back if you cannot attempt at least 2 'H' Grades, with a good chance of success, plus a good choice of National Courses, e.g. National 4 or 5, to make a worthwhile timetable.

Where do Highers lead?

Remember A, B, C grades are passes.

A's, B's and C's are entrance qualifications to Further and Higher Education.

No Highers, or One Higher, in S5/6:

If you stay on and pass no Highers or only one, in S5 and S6, you may then be at a real disadvantage when competing with younger S4 leavers for jobs or apprentice placements. You might have done much better in your career plans, by going straight on to a National Certificate (NC) course at College with your National qualifications at the end of S4 and moving on to a Higher National Certificate (HNC) course. You should discuss your plans with your Head of House and the Careers Adviser. Remember - the better your National results in S4, the better your chances in S5.

Two Highers

If you gain 2 Highers in S5 or S6, you then have very good prospects of entry to a wide range of Higher National Diploma (HND) courses at College or certain Universities. These can also offer the chance of later entry to suitable candidates to full degree courses. At Brechin, we offer Highers in various subjects in one year, or

over two years. A two-year course in a subject would involve completing a National 5 in S5, followed by the Higher in S6. A course of 2 Highers (over one or two years), plus a sensible selection of National Courses, ideally related to your future career plans in areas such as Business Education, Computing, Hospitality or Technology would make very good sense for your future.

Here are some examples of courses open to you with 2 Higher passes:-

HNC/HND courses at Scottish Colleges in, for example,

Agriculture, Horticulture, Sport, Art and Design, Hospitality Management, Environmental Studies, Leisure and Tourism

Three Highers

If you gain 3 Highers in S5 or S6, then all sorts of possibilities open up to you - Colleges of Further Education, or certain Universities, HND courses in a wide range of fields, and degree courses. A course of 3 Highers, with National 5s leading into Higher courses in S6, would be a very worthwhile reason for returning to S5 and indeed to S6. Here are some examples of courses open to you with 3 Higher passes:-

B Ed Music (CCC) – Aberdeen University

BA Business Management (BCC) - Queen Margaret University College

BA Hospitality Management (BCC) - Robert Gordon University

Four or Five Highers

If you gain 4 or 5 Highers in S5 or S6, then virtually all Higher courses at University are open to you. Ideally, your passes should be at one sitting, and the more A's and B's you gain, the better, especially for entry to Law, Medicine or Vet School. Success in 4 or 5 Highers in S5 would lead you naturally into Advanced Higher courses at S6, plus any other courses available and interesting to you. You could also apply for University entrance at the end of S5, although the Universities and the school would not normally recommend this. We would recommend that you come back to S6, and give yourself the opportunity to widen your experience before tackling University. Here are some examples of courses open to you with 4 or 5 Higher passes:

Law (AAAB) or (AABBB) - University of Aberdeen passes

Law (AAAB) - University of Edinburgh

Pharmacy (AAAB) - Strathclyde University

Veterinary Medicine (AAAB)- University of Glasgow

Medicine (AAAAA) - University of Glasgow

If there is any chance that you might return next session, you should remain at school until the end of June 2017. Remember the new timetable begins in June, and you will have missed the start of some courses if you leave in May and return in August.

Whatever your reasons for staying on, make sure that you have thought about it carefully and it is going to be worth your while. Try to be realistic about your chances of success.

Having decided to stay on you must choose the most appropriate course for you. We offer a wide choice, as described in this booklet, and on the website.

Decisions should be based on a realistic and honest assessment of your ability and an accurate up-to-date knowledge of the entrance qualifications for the careers or college/university courses you are considering.

Where can you get help and advice? Think about the following:-

1. Ask your teachers for advice.
2. Remember that any course you may choose for next session is provisional and depends on your SQA results this session.
3. Your future career interests. Check the up-to-date entry qualifications in the Careers Library yourself.
4. Speak to the Careers Adviser
5. Consider Work Experience
6. Go to the library and do some research
7. Financial concerns. If you are worried about money and a part-time job isn't the answer, talk to your parents. A local authority grant may be available for those staying on at school beyond 16. The award of a local authority bursary depends on parental income and details can be obtained from your Head of House.
8. On the next pages, you will see more information on the entry for Degree Courses to Scottish Colleges and Universities.

Notes on Scottish college/university entry for degree courses

It would be impossible to summarise the entry qualifications for Universities, as these vary from University to University, and between faculties within each University. You must consult the appropriate University or College

Prospectus outlining the current entry requirements. However, a few general points should be made:-

1. General requirements:-
 - (a) Passes in 5 approved subjects, including English, of which three are at SQA Higher grade.
- OR
- (b) Passes in 4 approved subjects, including English, of which all are at SQA Higher grade.
2. These are Highers obtained at one sitting. Usually a Higher obtained at two sittings must be a better grade. Some faculties would prefer pupils to do a Advanced Higher (AH) in the subject rather than repeat a Higher, whereas others do not accept an AH in lieu of acceptable Higher passes. CHECK the Universities' requirements.
3. Certain subjects are not approved subjects for University entry. Check the list of approved subjects in the Scottish Universities Entrance Guide.
4. There is strong competition for admission to most faculties or courses and the general requirements and any special requirements particular to individual faculties must be regarded as minimum requirements. Having made this point, it should also be noted that pupils who narrowly fail to meet these minimum requirements are sometimes accepted. Account is taken of adverse circumstances, a good Head Teacher's report, and sometimes, a pupil's performance in an interview.
5. Information about student loans/education maintenance allowances is available in the school from Mr Mills/Mrs Hutton.

Pupils returning to S6, and unsure about the best choice of subjects or whether they should repeat a Higher to achieve a better grade, may be able to obtain advice direct from the University faculty concerned. Faculties are usually happy to give advice about the course they would prefer a pupil to study. It is better to write, and an outline letter for you to complete and send to the appropriate University Faculties as soon as you know your results is given overleaf.

Entrance to University and a growing number of college courses is handled through the UCAS scheme (Universities and Colleges admissions Service). The application

process begins through the school every September, for pupils wishing to begin their courses in the autumn of the following year. Ask your Head of House, PCS staff or the Head Teacher for further details.

Sample letter to an admissions tutor (in case your results aren't what you expected)

Date

Admissions Tutor

Your address

Faculty of Department

University name

And address

Dear Sir or Madam,

COURSE CHOICE FOR S6

I have just completed S5 at Brechin High School and gained the following results:-

2016

Subject	Grade	Level	Subject	Grade	Level
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I would like to study at University and I are unsure about the best choice of subjects for next year.

I would like to do Higher....., but the following subjects are also possible; repeat Higher, or, or etc. As school starts again mid-August, I would be most grateful for any advice you are able to give me about my best options, at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully,

Sign Name

Print Name

If you are not going to University or College...

Perhaps university isn't for you. There are opportunities through apprenticeship schemes to be trained, and paid at the same time. Often these can lead on to degrees (which you will be sponsored by your company to undertake)

An appropriate work experience during your senior phase will help you prepare for apprenticeship applications. Please discuss this with your Pupil Care and Support teacher and we will try and build this into your course choice.

Finally...

If you have any questions about the course choice process, please speak in the first instance to your Pupil Care and Support teacher.