

GWA Sixth Form Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Students

September 2026 intake

Please read this document if you have a question that has not been answered by our other online material. It is designed to answer the main questions we know parents and students have, as simply as we can.

If your question is not answered, or if you require further clarification, please email us at sixthform@gwacademy.co.uk and we will get back to you as quickly as we can.

1. How big will the Sixth Form be next year?

Our Sixth Form continues to grow year on year. Now that our own GWA Year 11 students have been transitioning to Sixth Form for a few years, and our recruitment from other local secondary schools remains strong, the growth is beginning to slow. Next year we expect to have up to around 130 students in Year 12 and a total Sixth Form size of around 230-250 students. This allows us to be large enough to provide a wide curriculum and range of opportunities, but small enough to provide individual support for our students.

2. How do you support students as they move from secondary school?

We work very closely with our own Year 11s and local secondary schools. We will offer every applicant an opportunity to attend a 1:1 guidance meeting with a member of our Sixth Form team or SLT to discuss their application and their course choices. This helps to ensure that the student is applying for the courses that they are most suited to. We will also talk about any future goals or aspirations that the student has and how GWA can help them to achieve this. Our core values of Achievement, Care and Excellence are extremely important to us, and especially so in supporting our Y11 applicants in their transition to Sixth Form. We hold a Transition Day just after the GCSEs finish to allow the students to meet other students they will be joining Sixth Form with from other schools and get to know our staff and current students.

Once the students begin in Sixth Form the students will complete an induction programme, which is delivered through our tutorial time. Students will also build a good relationship with their tutor, the Sixth Form team, and their teachers, to ensure they always feel well supported on their journey through Sixth Form.

3. What are the entry requirements?

Our standard entry requirements are outlined in our prospectus. For a place on our Vocational Pathway you will require 25 GCSE points. Our Academic Pathway requires a minimum of 30 GCSE points. Details of how to calculate this can be found in the prospectus.

Each course also has specific entry requirements depending on the specialist skills or knowledge required. Further information on this can be found in our prospectus and on our website. Entry requirements will be discussed with you in our guidance meeting.

Entry requirements are essential to ensure you are able to access the demanding content of the courses. We offer three core pathways and a variety of subjects and will discuss with you the best options based on your predicted grades. On GCSE results day we will review your choices against your GCSE grades and confirm your place on your chosen courses, or help you in making alternative choices.

4. What are classes like in Sixth Form?

Our class sizes are generally much smaller than you will be used to from Key Stage 4. Our average class size is around 9-10 students, but this does vary from subject to subject. Some of our courses may only have 5-6 students, but the more popular subjects, such as Maths, Psychology and Business may have up to 25. Typically all classes will be smaller than you would find in college. This allows your teachers to get to know you much better and be able to support your learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching and Learning in Sixth Form is much more professional in the feel of the environment. Students in Sixth Form are young adults and we want to recognise this in the way that we teach, but also in the way we expect students to approach their work and their commitment to their studies.

5. How much homework should I expect in Sixth Form?

The amount of homework that you receive will vary between subjects, between Academic and Vocational courses and at different times of the year. Our staff are experienced A-Level and Level 3 practitioners and will ensure to provide the students with a variety of activities and resources to support their independent study. A good benchmark is that students should be looking to do a *minimum* of 4 hours independent study per subject, per week. Those aiming for the highest grades and most aspirational universities will be doing in excess of this.

Vocational subjects, and other courses with significant coursework/NEA, will have large pieces of work that will require significant amounts of work in independent study. The classroom is for delivering the content, guidance and support, but the production of the work will mainly be outside the classroom.

Homework at A-Level will take a variety of forms. It will likely include, but not be limited to prior reading, research, answering questions, essays and presentations.

6. Can I change my course once I have started?

We understand that some students may change their mind on some of their courses early in the school year. Our transition programme allows this to happen within the first FOUR weeks, and students are able to complete a course change request form. They are required to discuss the change with the teachers of both the course they wish to drop and the new course. We also ask that parents sign the form to confirm the change. Course changes are subject to the student meeting the entry requirements and there being space available in the class.

7. Is Sixth Form just like being in school?

No. Sixth Form is very different from Key Stage 4. Students will all have free periods, where they manage their time between study and social. Our three dedicated Sixth Form common rooms, the library and other work areas, provide students with a range of environments to study during their frees.

Sixth Form student's relationships with teachers and the way they interact with staff and learn in the classroom is also far more mature than lower school.

In addition, Sixth Form students have the following privileges and benefits:

- Casual clothes/no uniform
- Can leave site at lunch time
- Access to own common room and café
- Able to go home in the afternoon once lessons have finished (after 12:50pm)
- Can apply for morning Home Study (once induction is completed)
- A range of leadership and enrichment opportunities

8. What enrichment opportunities are there for Sixth Form?

GWA has an extensive enrichment programme that runs from 3:10 – 4:15pm on a Tuesday and Wednesday. Sixth Form are welcome and encouraged to be involved in these activities, which include sport, drama, arts and a wide range of other activities.

We also have some Sixth Form specific clubs, societies and opportunities and we operate the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. Sixth Form are also encouraged to start their own Societies and our staff will support you in getting these established.

9. How do you support your most able students?

We run a broad A Level programme and students will benefit from excellent teaching in all their classes. With the added benefit of small class sizes, students will have good access to their teachers and our staff are happy to provide additional support and advice outside of the classroom. Our enrichment programme also offers students the opportunity to develop their study skills and academic understanding through our Revision Café.

We are proud to have students applying to Oxford, Cambridge and other Russell Group Universities in a range of subject disciplines: including Medicine, Maths, Humanities and Natural Sciences. In addition many of our students go onto Apprenticeships with leading employers. Our GWAspire programme will support these students, providing personalised support when making their applications to help them with making their subject and university choices, writing their personal statement and preparing for entrance examinations.

There are numerous opportunities available to students to enhance their learning, such as EPQ and the work we carry out with Oxford University.

Students will be given a Potential Grade, which is calculated using their prior GCSE attainment and national A-Level data sets, to ensure that we are challenging ALL students to achieve best they possibly can and that they have all the support they need along the way. We have a strong pastoral support system and, in addition to monitoring their academic progress, we also place emphasis on supporting student's wider well-being.

10. What careers support and advice will I receive?

We ensure all Sixth Form students have access to high quality careers advice and guidance. There is a well-structured tutor programme that is delivered through our 2x 20-minute tutor periods per day. This will provide information and guidance on the variety of pathways available at Post 18 and also develop student's employability skills.

Students will also receive personalised support and guidance from their form tutor, Assistant Head of Sixth Form and Head of Sixth Form. As a small Sixth Form we get to know all of our students extremely well and can offer a personalised support package to ensure they have everything they need to make informed decisions.

At GWA we have three Successful Lives days across the year. These days, amongst other things, will provide opportunities for students to visit universities, hear from apprenticeship providers and develop their employability skills through workshops and activities. There will also be subject specific trips and visits and careers activities.

We organise talks for students from a variety of industries and organisations and students will take part in a work experience in Year 12.

In addition to the support we provide in school, we also work with an independent careers adviser who will deliver group sessions and 1:1 guidance meetings for all our Sixth Form students. This includes specific focus groups for those looking to apply to Oxbridge/medicine courses and those applying for apprenticeships.

11. Do students need their own laptop?

Yes. All students at GWA Sixth Form do need access to their own laptop to support their learning. Students are able to bring their own device in, or they can buy one from GWA, and a discounted price of £150. Students eligible for the 16-19 Bursary Fund can apply to have the cost of the GWA laptop covered.

As well as being used to support learning in the classroom, GWA Sixth Form students will also use their laptop during their independent study time and to allow them to access learning at home. They will also be used to research and make applications for Post 18 destinations.

All laptops will be subject to our Acceptable Use policy.

We embrace learning technologies and we use the Microsoft 365 suite and Microsoft Teams as a platform for sharing resources and managing learning materials.

12. What is the school's policy on mobile phones?

Students in the Sixth Form are allowed to use their phones in the common room areas only. We expect our students to set the example to younger students around school.

13. How do the catering arrangements work?

Our caterers provide a service at morning break, and lunchtime. Payment is made electronically via a biometrics system with parents uploading credit via ParentPay. In Sixth Form students can also pay for food by contactless payment in the Sixth Form Café at break time. This avoids students needing to bring any cash to school, and also means that students entitled to free school meals pass through the dining area in exactly the same way as all others. In addition to the on-site service, the Sixth Form also have access to their own kitchenette in the common room where they can prepare their own ready meals and hot drinks. Sixth Form are also permitted to leave site during their lunch break to visit the shop.

14. Is any transport provided?

The large majority of our students live within walking or cycling distance of school. Bike racks are available to secure bikes on site. There are not any school bus services to GWA, but there are a range of public bus services stopping in Tadpole Garden Village or nearby. We regret that there is not capacity for students to park their own cars on the school site.

15. What is the dress code?

Our dress code is published in our Handbook and provided to students at enrolment. Our Sixth Form dress code is reviewed annually. Our dress code can be summarised as 'Casual clothes, suitable for the professional environment'. Students are able to wear casual clothes, but we do have a few refinements around this, including: no ripped jeans, inappropriate slogans/logos, no facial piercings, no visible tattoos and no unnatural hair colours.