

GWA Sixth Form Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Students

September 2021 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 office@gwacademy.co.uk and we will get back to you as quickly as we can.

1. How big will the school be next year and when full?

We admit 150 students into each Year 7 cohort and currently have about 100 students in our Sixth Form. With students in years 7 to 10 next year, as well as 12 and 13, this means we anticipate having just over 700 students on roll. This will grow to the school's official capacity of 1210 by 2023, at which point years 7 to 11 will be full and our first lower school cohort will be entering the Sixth Form, making the Sixth Form much larger than is currently the case.

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

We work very closely with local secondary schools. We will offer every applicant an invite to attend a 1:1 guidance meeting with a member of our 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 will also be hosting a number of meetings and events across the year to allow the students to meet applicants from other schools and get to know our staff and current students.

3. What are the entry requirements?

Our standard entry requirements are five GCSEs grade 9-4. Each course also has specific entry requirements depending on the specialist skills or experience required. Further information on this can be found in our prospectus and 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 A-Level courses. We offer 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. GWA does not have any results – how do I know I will get good quality teaching?

This is a natural and sensible question to ask as you make this big decision. All of our teachers have been recruited because of their ability to teach at A-Level. Although GWA is a relatively new school, we have an extremely experienced team of teachers who, between them, have many years of experience teaching A-Levels and delivering exceptional results. We have received a lot of positive feedback and praise from our current students and their parents about the quality of teaching and learning that is being delivered at GWA Sixth Form. Our internal data monitoring shows that our students are making exceptional progress across all levels of ability and all subjects. Our current Year 13 students are applying with confidence to top

universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, and for high quality apprenticeship programmes with firms such as St James's Place. As part of our induction process this year we will be inviting you in to meet our teachers and our current students. You will have the opportunity to ask them about their experience of GWA and I am in no doubt that they will reassure you of the quality of education that you will receive at GWA.

5. How much homework should I expect during A-Level studies?

The amount of homework that you receive will vary between subjects and at different times of the year. Our staff are experienced A-Level 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.

6. How does enrichment work for Sixth Form?

Our enrichment programme runs from 3:10 – 4:15pm, Monday – Thursday. It is compulsory for Year 7-10 but is optional for Sixth Form. However, there are a variety of activities and opportunities on offer for our Sixth Form Students. These range from Sixth Form only enrichment, such as Gold DofE and Drama clubs, study support and revision café, to the opportunity to help with the activities being offered for the lower school. We encourage Sixth Form students to stay and take part in activities at least twice per week. Sixth Form are also able to plan and run their own enrichment activities, with approval and supervision from staff.

7. How big are your classes?

This varies between subjects, but GWA is a small Sixth Form and we can guarantee you that our average class sizes will be below that of other local providers and far lower than those you would experience at college. In most cases class sizes are between 5-15 students. At GWA, all students will enjoy small class sizes and the benefits of increased contact with their teachers.

8. 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.

This year we are proud to have 5 students applying to Oxbridge in a range of subject disciplines: Medicine, Maths, History and Natural Sciences. Students will receive 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.

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.

9. 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 week 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.

10. Do students really get their own laptops?

Yes! All students at GWA are provided with their own laptop. As well as being used to support learning in the classroom, GWA Sixth Form students will also benefit from being able to use their laptops during their independent study time and to allow them to access learning at home. Having laptops was an invaluable resource during lockdown and it meant that all of our Sixth Form students were able to access on-line learning resources without disadvantage. We embrace learning technologies and we use Microsoft the 365 suite and Microsoft Teams as a platform for sharing resources and managing learning materials.

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

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

12. How do the catering arrangements work?

Our caterers provide a service at breakfast, morning break, and full hot meals at lunchtime. Payment is made electronically via a biometrics system with parents uploading credit via ParentPay. 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 visit the local Sainsbury's store during their lunch break.



13. Is any transport provided?

The very large majority of our students live within walking or cycling distance of school, but there are two public buses which serve the school site at the start and end of the school day – the number 9 and the number 957. We also operate a minibus service to Highworth and Blunsdon at the start and end of the day. Places on this service are bookable through the main school office.

14. What is the dress code?

There is no uniform or formal dress code in the Sixth Form. Students can wear casual clothes, but we do have a few refinements around this, including: no ripped jeans, inappropriate slogans/logos, no sportswear and no facial piercings or unnatural hair colours. Further information on our dress code expectations will be provide as part of the induction pack.