

Welcome to  
your future

24 | 25

# A-LEVELS STUDENT HANDBOOK



Solihull College  
& University Centre

Stratford-upon-Avon  
College





# WELCOME TO YOUR FUTURE



**A message from Sonia Wallace,  
the Assistant Principal for the  
Service Industries Faculty**

I am delighted you have chosen Solihull College and University Centre to study your A-Levels.

With subject specialists supporting and guiding you through your two year A-Level programme you will receive the highest quality education. A-Levels will open doors to university, apprenticeships or employment, the possibilities are endless.

I am sure you have high expectations of us, and we have high expectations of you and your commitment to your course and studies, with this I am sure you will achieve your potential and have a successful future.

Thank you for choosing us, and best wishes for a successful two years!

# Programme of Study Overview

This booklet is designed to help you make an informed decision about whether to pursue A-Levels here at Solihull College. By choosing to study at the college, you are not only selecting a place for the next two years of your education, but you are also committing to prepare yourself for and achieve the necessary qualifications for admission to a reputable university or higher education program, employment or further educational training. Additionally, you should aim to expand your horizons by seeking a variety of accomplishments, experiences, and interests, while nurturing your personality and cultivating a curious mind that will propel you forward.

## Our Commitment to You

Solihull College aims for you to make the very most of your abilities and opportunities to develop your academic, employability and personal skills, as well as foster your talents and interests. Whilst we expect you to work hard, you should enjoy your studies and leave with no regrets. It is expected that you will be both motivated and ambitious, willing to stretch yourself academically.



### INSPIRING

#### Motivating others to excel

We recognise and celebrate achievement, and empower staff and learners to exceed their perceived potential.



### INNOVATIVE

#### Transforming our ideas

We seek continuous improvement, and use innovation to adapt to change.



### COLLABORATIVE

#### Working together to achieve shared goals

We operate as one team, valuing the contribution each of us makes.



### CARING

#### Making a difference

We care about the wellbeing of our staff, learners and communities by trusting, listening to, engaging with and supporting each other.



### RESPONSIBLE

#### Making things happen

We are open, honest, and take full responsibility, individually and collectively, for our decisions, actions, performance and results.



### RESPECTFUL

#### Welcoming others into our college community

We celebrate difference and diversity. We value others and recognise that their thoughts and feelings are as important as our own.



# How Should Subject Choices Be Made?

If you excel in a subject and have a passion for it, it is crucial to consider studying it seriously, regardless of others' opinions. Strive for the best grades possible in two years' time.

**When deciding on your options, make sure you:**

**Enjoy your studies:** at level 3, each subject delves into greater depth compared to GCSE level. Dedication is crucial. You will know whether you have enjoyed a subject whilst studying at school, it is difficult to predict your interest in new subjects at college. Even subjects you previously enjoyed at GCSE may present differently at A-Level. It is essential to review the subject guides below and attend the A-Level taster day in the summer term to gain a better understanding of each subject.

**Have an aptitude for subjects you study:** A-Levels are more challenging than GCSEs, with complex concepts and in-depth examination questions that demand well-thought-out responses. Attaining at least a Grade 5/6 at GCSE in a subject is essential for success.

## Entry Requirements

You will require a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grade 5 and above\*. This must include English language and Maths. Individual subjects may have specific entry requirements (see courses for details). This will enable you to tackle studying A-Levels with reasonable confidence of success.

There is some flexibility as we recognise students' abilities and personalised ambitions differ as do the demands of specific courses. Each case will be considered on its merits and advice will be given to individuals to ensure that their best interests are well served. Where possible we will tailor courses to individual needs but ultimately, we will not set pupils up with programmes of study which they are unlikely to succeed.

*\*A-Level maths and accounting ask for a grade 6 and above. A-Level chemistry ask for grade 6 in chemistry and maths.*

## Entry Requirements for two (year 13)

If you have found it difficult to handle the requirements of year 12, it is not advisable to proceed to a more challenging year in the second year of your program. The first year covers half of the total A-Level course content, so it is crucial for you to take it seriously and aim for a minimum grade of C. If you consistently performed poorly on your mock exams in the first year, it may be suggested or even required for you to consider switching to a different academic program to ensure you have the best opportunities for the future.

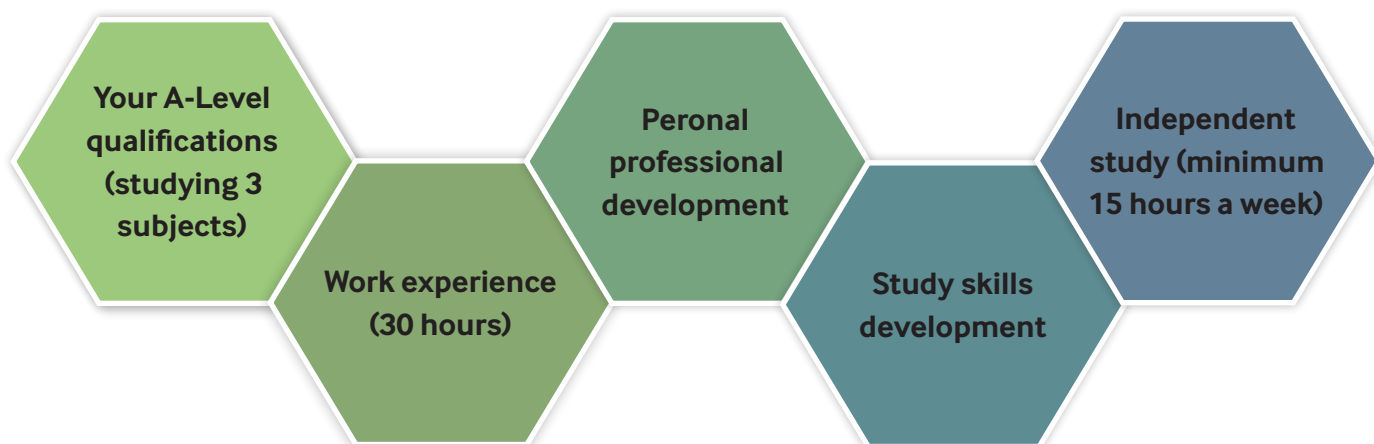
# Managing Your Learning

Taking responsibility for your learning is essential for success in your A-level course. While support is available from your subject tutors and Personal Development Coach, ultimately your final grades will reflect the effort you put in. It is important to make the most of the resources available to you.

Your subject tutors, Personal Development Coach, and learning support team will work together to help you set goals, create targets, and track your progress throughout the course. Regular homework and independent study tasks will be assigned to help reinforce your learning and provide feedback on your progress. These tasks also play a crucial role in determining predicted grades for university applications through UCAS.

## The Wider Curriculum

As Level 3 A-Level students, your educational journey is composed of various components that collectively form your programme of study. Alongside your substantial A-Level qualifications, your programme of study is made up of a few elements, these elements include:



These elements are designed to provide a comprehensive and enriching learning experience aimed at equipping you with the tools and knowledge necessary for success in your academic and future endeavours.

# PPD - Empower Your Learning

Our Personal Progress and Development programmes have been designed to allow weekly contact with Personal Development Coaches in order to build positive pastoral relationships that enable you to progress and thrive. The PPD sessions intend to prepare you for lifelong learning and employment, to develop confidence to explore the world around you and build resilience to overcome challenges. PPD sessions enable you to develop confidence, resilience, values and become positive contributing members of society.

As Level 3 students, it is essential that you take an active role in shaping your educational journey. Engaging with the action planning and target setting process is crucial for your growth and development. This process:

- ▶ Empowers you to take ownership of planning your learning journey
- ▶ Equips you with the tools to make well-informed decisions
- ▶ Helps you establish and achieve both long-term and short-term goals
- ▶ Encourages self-evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Involves setting targets to address weaknesses and accomplish short-term objectives
- ▶ Celebrates your accomplishments

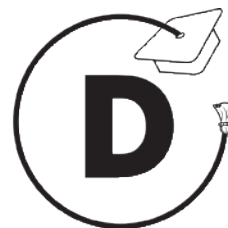
Remember, this is a continual process where you will collaborate with your Personal Development Coach and subject tutors regularly to evaluate progress and set new targets for your academic success.



**PERSONAL**



**PROGRESS**



**DEVELOPMENT**



# Independent Study

Once you begin your A-Level course, you will often hear about the importance of independent study. But what exactly does this entail? Independent study is a crucial component in achieving your desired grades at A-Level, involving studying outside of your timetabled classes for each subject. Your timetable will include unsupervised study sessions dedicated to independent study for each of your three subjects.

It is recommended that each A-Level subject requires a minimum of 5 hours per week of independent study, totalling 15 hours per week outside of face-to-face sessions.

## So, what does independent study include?

- ▶ **Teacher set tasks, essays, research** – referred to as homework at school.
- ▶ **Revisiting / rewriting your class notes** – so that you don't forget them (consolidating your learning) and so that they are more easily accessible for revision for your examinations.
- ▶ **Reading around the subject or topic you are learning about in class** – You will be given a reading list for each subject at the start of the academic year.
- ▶ **Watching a documentary or DVD** – something related to your subject / topic.
- ▶ **Reading a newspaper article relevant to your subject** – some of the broadsheet newspapers have sections dedicated to psychology, law, literature and sociology. You will find copies of daily newspapers in the library and online.
- ▶ **Visits and Trips** – visiting museums and galleries or trips to the theatre to enhance your understanding of your subjects.
- ▶ **Undertaking private research** – relevant to your area of study.
- ▶ **Flipped Learning** – Your teacher sets preparation tasks needed to take a full and active part in a planned lesson.



# Building a Strong Foundation with Academic Support

As you transition into adulthood, our teaching staff will acknowledge this shift and empower you to express your individual thoughts and ideas independently. While independence is encouraged, we understand that all learners may require additional support at times. Whether you are facing personal struggles such as friendship issues, relationship challenges, or difficulty managing independent study, we are here to help.

Our comprehensive support system is designed to ensure that you can thrive academically and personally. Your Personal Development Coach will serve as your primary source of advice and guidance, but specialised support from our Student Support Team is also available. Our Student Services include various resources to help breakdown any barriers that may be hindering your progress, such services include:

- ▶ Additional Needs Support
- ▶ Care Leavers support
- ▶ Counselling services
- ▶ Exams and Assessment support
- ▶ Mental Health support
- ▶ Student Finance support
- ▶ Welfare support
- ▶ Assistance for Young Adult Carers.





## Your Next Step

Solihull College provides an important springboard between school and Higher Education or the world of work, so we always have our eyes on your future. However, the choices that lie before you can be complex and confusing – that's where our specialist careers team are on hand to support. The careers team have the expertise to guide you through the whole university admissions process, through both personal advice sessions and by providing the opportunity to attend university open days and Higher Education fairs.

Here at Solihull, we have a subscription to UniFrog, a platform that will help you to make informed decisions about your future. UniFrog is the universal destinations platform which compares every university course, every apprenticeship, and Further Education courses, and then will guide you through the application process.

### Staying at Solihull College

There is the option of staying local and continuing your higher education journey with us here at Solihull college. We offer a range of BSc's, Foundation degrees, HNCs, HNDs and Foundation Degrees in areas such as:

- ▶ Aerospace Engineering
- ▶ Animal Welfare & Veterinary Nursing
- ▶ Art & Design
- ▶ Business & Management
- ▶ Digital Media Production
- ▶ Education & Childcare
- ▶ Graphic Design
- ▶ Health & Social Care
- ▶ Manufacturing Engineering
- ▶ Mechanical Engineering
- ▶ Performing & Production Arts
- ▶ Photography
- ▶ Psychology, Criminology & Law
- ▶ Science
- ▶ Social Sciences

A full list can be found on our website.



There is also the option of Higher Apprenticeships after your A-Levels. Higher Apprenticeships are available at a range of levels (levels 4-7), from the equivalent of a foundation degree to a bachelor's degree. Apprenticeships are ideal if you are looking to enter the world of work and study for a higher-level qualification at the same time. Please see our website for the list of Higher Apprenticeships.

## A-Level Subjects Available

**A full list of the A-Levels we offer can be found on our website:**

<https://www.solihull.ac.uk/category/a-levels/>





# Getting Involved at College

## Enrichment

The Enrichment Team is here to make your time outside of lessons, fun, exciting, interesting and informative. All throughout the year, our student enrichment officers organise themed events and a varied, engaging range of great activities, ensuring your time with us isn't all work and no play. We support the Learner Voice system which gives you, the student, the opportunity to tell us how your time at college is going, what we are doing well and what you would like to see improved. We do this through the appointment of Student Reps for each group and through the election of the Student Voice Executive Committee.

## Learner Voice

Executive Committee Students wishing to make a positive contribution to college life can do so by getting involved in the running of the Learner Voice Executive Committee. Each year, the student body elects student executives to direct the organisation and represent their fellow students, ensuring their collective voice is heard. As part of the College's commitment to involve students in its governance, each year the elected Learner Voice President is invited to become a College Governor. To find out more about how you can get involved, contact Student Enrichment.

## FE Student Council

This group has representatives from each FE course. They meet in the Autumn and Spring terms to discuss the FE student experience; FE course representatives are also invited to attend the Student Conference. Agenda items for the Student Council meetings are requested from students and any issues relating to the course or College can be raised – so if you want to make your voice heard and represent your peers, volunteer to be a representative! Your Personal Development Coach will hold representative elections in your group and pass details on to Student Enrichment.



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