

General information on the choice of subjects in Secondary School

Dear pupils,
Dear parents and guardians,

Our school offers a very wide range of subjects which enable pupils to increasingly specialise according to their own wishes and preferences. In the Baccalaureate cycle S6/S7 pupils can, to a large extent, design their own teaching programme according to their interests and future outlook. In the following summary we would like to give an overview of these possibilities.

1. Basic regulations

Regulations on the range and choice of subjects can be found in the “General Rules” and in the documents “Language Policy of the European Schools” and “The European School Curriculum: Structure and Organisation of studies and courses in the European Schools”.¹ Some particularly important regulations are listed here in excerpts:

- Course selection must be made in such a way that the minimum and maximum number of hours per week are met.
- A course in S1-5 must reach the minimum number of seven pupils to be established. In S6/S7, optional courses are opened if at least five pupils have chosen this course.
- For cycles S1-3 and S4/S5, the Joint Teaching Committee in 2014 reiterated that an optional subject chosen at the beginning of the cycle must in principle be taken until the end of the cycle.
- In some cases, subjects can only be chosen if they have already been taken in previous years.
- The first language (L1) determined at the time of the pupil's enrolment is in principle definitive. A change of the first language can only be initiated by members of the class conference. It can only be approved by the school management if there are compelling pedagogical reasons duly established by the class conference.

¹ These documents can be found on the website for the Office of the Secretary General of the European Schools: <https://www.eursec.eu>.

2. Information for S1-3

In the first three years, pupils are taught in their mother tongue in most subjects. A second foreign language (L3) is now compulsory for all pupils from S1 onwards. Here they can choose between German, English, French, Italian or Spanish. Pupils whose nationality is Irish or Maltese can also take Gaelic or Maltese as optional subjects.

Latin is optional from S2 onwards. If Latin is chosen, it must be continued in S3 and can only be discontinued in S4. In the case where Latin is chosen, computer science (ICT) cannot also be taken in S3, but it can be chosen from S4 onwards without having taken it beforehand in S3. For pupils with L1 Greek, Ancient Greek is offered as an optional subject.

In S3, all pupils are taught humanities, religion or ethics in their first foreign language (L2). Those who have chosen Latin continue with this subject. The remaining pupils are offered computer science (ICT) as an optional subject.

3. Information for S4/S5

In the fourth and fifth year, the compulsory subjects in integrated sciences are differentiated into physics, chemistry and biology, and in human sciences into history and geography. Pupils can choose between the standard course (4 periods) and the intensive course (6 periods) in mathematics. Optional subjects include art, music, computer science (2 periods), economics, Latin (if already taken in S2 and S3), Ancient Greek and a third foreign language L4 (4 periods each). The chosen teaching programme must be between 31 and 35 periods per week.

In mathematics, a subsequent change of level between the intensive and standard course is only possible on the basis of a written justified application with the approval of the director and the class conference; in the case of a request of the higher level, an examination is required. If the change is requested in S4, the application must be submitted by 15.01. of the current school year at the latest, with the change then coming into effect in the 2nd semester. For applications received by 31.01., a change in the new school year (S5) can be approved.

4. Information for S6/S7

S6 and S7 form a cycle of study and lead to the Baccalaureate. Although a number of compulsory subjects are set (L1, L2, religion/ethics, mathematics standard or intensive course, a science subject, philosophy, physical education, history and geography), pupils have a wide range of further options, such as another foreign language L5 or laboratory courses. In

addition, they can choose between two-period, four-period or so-called advanced courses. The chosen teaching programme must be between 31 and 36 periods per week.

When choosing a subject for S6 (deadline: 31.01. in the school year of S5) – and only then – a change of the choice of foreign language can be applied for, whereby the relevant regulations (e.g. organisational requirements of the school, successful passing of language assessment) must be observed. Approval can then be given for the choice of a different L2 (with language test), an increase in the level of a certain language (e.g. from L4 to L3, with language test) as well as a downgrading of the level of a particular language (e.g. from L2 to L3). If a change of L2 is approved, the former L2 remains the language of instruction for history, geography, economics and all chosen supplementary subjects.

The possibilities for changing subjects for pupils who are promoted from year 6 to year 7 are regulated in the document “Arrangement for Implementing the Regulations for the European Baccalaureate”². After a written request (deadline 31.03. of the current school year), the agreement of the Director and class council, the following can be approved at the beginning of Year 7:

- A change in mathematics from the intensive to the standard course.
- Change from a 4-period optional subject to a 2-period compulsory subject, e.g. history, geography, philosophy or the subject science, technology and society (STS).
- Change from a 2-period compulsory subject to a 4-period optional subject (examination required).

Important: At least two option subjects must be chosen. In addition, the substitution of an option subject for another is not permitted.

5. Deadlines for the choice of subjects

All subject choices are made via an online form. The deadlines for the choice of subjects are as follows:

- Choice of subjects in S1 for S2: 31.01. of the respective school year
- Choice of subjects in S2 for S3: 31.01. of the respective school year
- Choice of subjects in S3 for S4/S5: 31.01. of the respective school year
- Choice of subjects in S5 for S6/S7: 31.01. of the respective school year

6. Provisions for the subsequent change of the choice of subjects

If there are important pedagogical or health reasons which make a subsequent change in the choice of subjects absolutely necessary, the following regulations and procedures apply:

² This document can be found on the website for the Office of the Secretary General of the European Schools: <https://www.eursec.eu>.

A written, signed application must be submitted to the school management by the parents, legal guardians or the adult pupil via the responsible educational advisor who will provide the form “Application to opt out of a subject”. In the application, compelling reasons must be explained in detail, if applicable with supporting documents. The deadline for such requests is 31.03. of the current school year for all grades. In year 6 there is the exception that in special cases the change can still be approved within the first eight days of the new school year on the basis of a justified application. Applications received after these deadlines cannot be considered for organisational reasons. In certain cases, examinations have to be taken for the purpose of level classification. Depending on the regulations, the consultation and opinion of the class conference is then necessary. In the end, the director decides on the application on the basis of the available documents.

If you have any questions about the choice of subjects, please visit our regular information events. You are also welcome to contact the Education Advisory Service or Careers Guidance who can also advise you, for example, on the requirements of certain degree programmes in the various countries.

Kind regards,



Martin Duggen
Director Secondary School

Annex: Overview of courses and periods

Anhang: Übersicht über Kurse und Unterrichtsstunden

Annex: Overview of courses and periods

An important characteristic of the European school system is the gradual introduction of L2 – subjects taught in L2 are marked in orange in the tables for clarity: “An important element in the role of foreign languages is that as from S3, Language 2 gradually becomes the language of tuition of Human Sciences, History, Geography, Economics, Religion and Ethics. In the case of Music, Art, Physical Education and to an extent ICT, education is provided in mixed groups of pupils from different language sections through a language in the pupil’s curriculum.” (“Language Policy of the European Schools”)

Overview of courses and periods S1-3

	Number of periods per week (1 period = 45 minutes of teaching)		
	S1	S2	S3
Language 1	5	5	4
Mathematics	4	4	4
Language 2	5	4	4
Language 3	2	3	3
Physical Education	3	3	3
Religion / Ethics	2	2	2
Human Sciences	3	3	3
Integrated Science	4	4	4
Latin	-	2*	2*
Art	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2
ICT	1	1	2*
TOTAL	33	33 or 35	31 or 33
Ancient Greek (for pupils with EL as L1)	-	2**	2**
ONL – Other National Language	2**	2**	2**
TOTAL for pupils entitled to receive Ancient Greek or ONL**	35	35 or 37	33 or 35

*Optional courses

- S1: No optional courses
- S2: Optional Latin
- S3: Optional ICT and Latin, pupils can choose only one of these two options.

**Options governed by specific rules (ONL and Ancient Greek) => see document “Language Policy”

Overview of courses and periods S4/S5

	Number of periods per week	
	S4	S5
Mandatory Core Subjects:		
Language 1	4	4
Mathematics	4 or 6	4 or 6
Language 2	3	3
Language 3	3	3
Physical Education	2	2
Religion / Ethics	1	1
History	2	2
Geography	2	2
Biology	2	2
Chemistry	2	2
Physics	2	2
SUBTOTAL	27 or 29	27 or 29
Options:		
Latin	4	4
Ancient Greek	4	4
Language 4	4	4
Economy	4	4
Art	2	2
Music	2	2
ICT	2	2
TOTAL	31* to 35**	31* to 35**
Ancient Greek (for pupils with EL as L1)	2	2
ONL – Other National Language	4***	4***
TOTAL for pupils entitled to receive Ancient Greek or ONL	33 or 37	33 or 37

* The minimum number of courses taken by the pupil must amount to 31 or more periods per week. If a pupil takes Mathematics 6 periods, the minimum will be 33 periods.

** Exceeding the maximum 35 periods.

*** Pupils choosing the Other National Language cannot choose Language 4.

Overview of courses and periods S6/S7

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS		OPTIONS				COMPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS ⁶			
Column 1		Column 2		Column 3		Column 4		Column 5	
Language 1	4 p.	Science, Technology and Society ¹	2 p.	Ancient Greek	4 p.	Advanced L1	3 p.	Biology Lab ⁷	2 p.
Language 2	3 p.	Geography ²	2 p.	Latin	4 p.	Advanced L2	3 p.	Chemistry Lab ⁷	2 p.
Maths 3 or Maths 5	3 p. 5 p.	History ² Philosophy ²	2 p. 2 p.	Biology ³ Chemistry ³	4 p. 4 p.	Advanced Maths ⁵	3 p.	Physics Lab ⁷	2 p.
Religion or Ethics	1 p.			Physics ³	4 p.			ICT	2 p.
Physical Education	2 p.			Geography	4 p.			Sociology	2 p.
				History	4 p.			Lab Art	2 p.
				Economics	4 p.			Art ⁸	2 p.
				Philosophy	4 p.			Music ⁸	2 p.
				ONL ⁴	4 p.			Language 5	2 p.
				Language 3	4 p.			Sustainability and Active Citizenship	2 p.
				Language 4	4 p.			<i>[Introduction to Economics]⁹</i>	2 p.
				Art	4 p.			Sport	2 p.
				Music	4 p.			<i>[History of Art]</i>	2 p.
				<i>[Technical Drawing]</i>	2 p.				
				Myth and Society in the Classical World	2 p.				
				Electronics	2 p.				
				Political Sciences	2 p.				
				Performing Arts and Media	2 p.				
		¹ Science, Technology and Society 2p. is compulsory unless Physics or Chemistry or Biology is chosen in column 3 .		³ Biology, Chemistry and Physics 4p can be chosen together with Science, Technology and Society.		⁵ Advanced Maths can only be chosen together with Maths 5 periods in column 1.		⁶ The offer of complementary courses vary from one school to another.	
		² All courses in column 2 must be taken if not chosen in column 3.		⁴ If ONL is chosen, L4 cannot be chosen.				⁷ Laboratory subjects should only be taken if the corresponding 4-period subject has been chosen.	
								⁸ Art 2 p. and Music 2 p. not allowed if taken in column 3.	
								⁹ This course has been temporarily suspended from the offer since the school year 2025/26 due to syllabus revision until further notice.	