

Portlethen Academy Course Choice Rationale and Course Options Timeline

Rationale

To offer each pupil in Portlethen Academy

An appropriate curriculum based on

- National Guidelines
- Appropriate progression and excellence for the individual
- Equity for all pupils
- Personal choice
- Preparation for life after school
- Available resources i.e. Staff, Facilities etc

The curriculum structure follows the national guidelines.

- First to third year follow a broad general education base on the 'Curriculum for Excellence'
- At the end of second year pupils choose six courses to study along with Mathematics and English.
- At the end of third year pupils choose four courses to study along with Mathematics or Applications of Mathematics and English for certification at the end of fourth year.
- In fifth year pupils will study five courses which they have chosen. These can be progression from the previous year or new courses. These will be certificated at the end of the year.
- Sixth year is similar to fifth year only pupils study four courses to allow time for additional activities to develop their CV.

At Portlethen Academy we believe that pupils will best achieve their potential by following courses which they have chosen and are happy with. This concept underpins all of that we do in our procedures for course choice and timetabling.

Aims

- To enable all pupils to follow courses appropriate to them
- To enable as many pupils as possible to follow the courses they wish
- To provide high quality support and guidance to pupils and parents in making their choice of course
- To facilitate good learning and teaching through a well structured timetable for both pupils and staff

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The following sections contain the procedures that are in place to further these aims

1. Deciding the curriculum
2. Design of choice forms
3. Making Choices
4. Issue and return of Choice forms
5. Review of Pupil Choice in August after Exam results
6. Change of Course during the Session
7. Choices & Timetable Year Planner

Deciding the Curriculum

The curriculum is determined by the SLT in consultation with Faculties and the Parent Council using the Scottish Government Guidelines such as the Curriculum for Excellence and the Journey to Excellence along with the previously stated rationale.

The discussions are ongoing throughout the development planning process when Departments are preparing for future sessions.

Design of Choice Forms

These are constructed to allow for maximum pupil choice within the courses available.

In the Senior Phase the form is a choice of subjects which are not tied to particular timetable columns.

The object is to provide forms that are

- Easy to understand
- Clear
- Simple to complete

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Making Choices

- Senior Phase choice should be a 1, 2 or 3 year plan that pupils explore in S3 and revisit as they progress, gain qualifications and refine their career choices. It needs to be fluid but aspirational and targeted to meet their “exit” goals. It must also be designed to make them “work/further study ready”. When choosing a pathway through S4-6 pupils need to ensure breadth and explore the subjects that this might mean and the entry levels for them at an early stage.

Pupils are advised to choose subjects based on the following:

- Attainment and Ability, what they are good at
- What they enjoy
- What they will need for college, university, work/apprenticeships based on the best possible current information and advice

Further advice

- Entry level to Higher over 1 year is Nat 5 A or B. Any exceptions to this would be discussed with the relevant Principal Teachers and DHTs
- When selecting “crash” subjects pupils are advised to pick subjects that are complimented by ones they have already done. Eg Biology is a good base for picking up Geography, Modern Studies is a good base for History, Physics would effectively support a pupil crashing Engineering Science
- Crash subjects at Higher require base level A or B in complimentary subjects at National 5 and/or complimentary Highers. Ie Higher History would require a Nat 5 A or B in English and Modern Studies or a Higher in English along with other complimentary subjects.
- We strongly advise pupils to gain a qualification in Business, Admin or ICT as part of their suit of courses in the senior phase and they should plan for this. This reflects the Developing the Young Workforce agenda and that the skills and knowledge will be useful in any future employment.
- Advanced Highers: Unless applying for a course or University that specifically asks for a number of AH we advise that pupils do one or two so that they get the experience of working more independently and at the level of Uni work. It would only be appropriate for young people with A or B in Higher except in exceptional circumstances and is aimed at young people planning on University or 2+2 College then University.
- Currently our S6 pupils underperform compared to Aberdeenshire and National figures. This potentially disadvantages them when applying for jobs or further studies. This is why we insist on a minimum of 4 subjects and why it is essential that S6 is not viewed as an easy year. S6 should combine further Attainment, completion of attainment and development of wider skills and experience.
- Elements of flexibility can be built in to individual timetables with College, Work experience and Volunteering as possibilities
- Pupils should avoid making choices on the basis of what their friends are doing or on the basis of teachers they like or dislike.

Pupils and Parents have a programme of support from

- Guidance teachers
- The Careers service
- Subject Teachers
- SLT

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In addition online resources are available including <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/> , <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/> and college and university websites.

Our objective is to ensure that pupils make reasoned informed choices.

Summary

Choice of course for S3

All pupils do English and Mathematics and courses in PSE, RMPS and PE, They then have a choice of 6 subjects from the following curricular areas, Science, Technology, Expressive Arts and Fitness, Modern Languages and Social Studies.

Choice of courses for S4

All pupils do English, Mathematics and courses in PSE, RMPS and PE
They should then have free choice of a further four subjects.

Choice of courses for S5 and 6

It is recommended that pupils consider continuing with English and Mathematics. However this is not compulsory. All pupils will continue with courses in PSE and Aiming Higher. Beyond this pupils have free choice taking into account their current attainment in selecting the appropriate progression.

- S5 pupils choose 5 courses
- S6 Pupils choose 4 courses with an agreement to drop to 3 courses if they are all Advanced Higher.

This reduction in the number of formal courses studied allows time for enrichment activities such as year book, Young Enterprise, Work Experience and other wider aspects of the S6 curriculum.

Issue and Return of choice forms

See annual timeline below.

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Review of Pupil Choice in August after Exam results

Rationale

- To ensure that each pupil is embarking on an appropriate programme of work that will provide for their future needs
- An appropriate progression
- Opportunity to gain further qualifications

Criteria for review

Guidance Team and SLT will consider pupil requests, considering appropriate

- Courses
- Given requirements for future progression
- Acquisition of Skills for the future

Levels of course

- Given departmental recommendations
- Results in National Qualifications Examinations (National 3,4 or 5, Higher)

Faculties will consider existing pupil courses and levels of course taking into account

- Expected pupil performance and professional knowledge of pupil
- Pupil exam performance and entry requirements of course
- Possible success

Process

- Any pupil who wishes to change their choices should discuss the matter with their Guidance teacher.
- Any Department that wishes to recommend a change of course can refer the matter to the appropriate Guidance Teacher.
- The Guidance Teacher will discuss what is appropriate and possible, using information provided by SLT.
- When an agreement is reached on the appropriate way forward the change of course form should be completed and signed.
- Where an agreement cannot be reached then the matter should be referred to SLT

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Procedure

- SLT provide Guidance with up to date class lists for each column, posted in a Guidance area. Guidance staff are informed in advance of the maximum class sizes

Pupils who wish to review their choices in light of their examination results will

- Make an appointment to see their Guidance teacher when they return to school
- Explore options and complete form (appendix *) if a change of class is available
- The form should then be signed by the pupil, guidance teacher and a parent before being handed in to SLT
- The form will then be processed and the pupil will be issued with a new timetable.
- The pupil only moves class when a new timetable has been issued

A faculty who wish to recommend a change of course or level of course because of the results should

- Discuss the matter with the pupil
- Submit a change of course form (see appendix 8) to the appropriate Guidance teacher. Reasons for a change should be clearly given on the form.

The Guidance teacher will

- Discuss the matter with the pupil, parents and department and explore options for the pupil
- Support the completion of a change of level form
- Arrange for the form to be signed by the pupil, guidance teacher and a parent before being handed in to SLT

The form will then be processed and the pupil will be issued with a new timetable. Again, the pupil only moves class when a new timetable has been issued

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Change of Course / Level or dropping a course during the Session

Change of Course

Changes of course are deemed to be by exceptional circumstances only after the beginning of September, when a course will have run for six weeks. In these circumstances, changes would only be permitted if a pupil could change into a subject that they have studied already and could upgrade to a better grade.

Such a change would usually be initiated by a pupil or their parent and would involve a conversation with their Guidance teacher who would then discuss with the year head and timetabler.

Change of Level

There are two occasions in an academic session where changes of levels are actively made. In early September, the SQA Coordinator will seek information from faculties to try and ensure that pupils are placed at their correct levels. Principal Teachers will be expected to complete a spreadsheet indicating the correct level that a pupil will be studying at throughout the session to allow this to happen. The SQA Coordinator will then arrange for the necessary changes to be made before the first set of reports are issued in term one.

Following the prelim examinations, the SQA Coordinator will again issue a spreadsheet to Principal Teachers to seek information on any further level changes. Once collated, a letter will be sent home to the parents / carer of any pupil who has been recommended to change a level. The pupil and the parent must sign and return the letter to indicate whether or not they are happy to make changes to the level. Once this has been returned to the SQA Coordinator, they will arrange for the necessary changes to be made.

Dropping a course

Pupils are expected to continue with a full complement of subjects and refrain from dropping a course so as not to disadvantage themselves. However, if a decision is reached to allow a pupil to drop a course, and it is impractical at that time to start an alternative, they will normally remain in the class in which they are dropping. During that time they can either continue to work on that course (possibly as a preparation for a second attempt) or work on coursework for one of their other subjects.

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Date	Events	Actions	Roles and responsibilities	Notes
Ongoing throughout the session	Careers talks / assemblies	Careers talks arranged throughout the session highlighting entry requirements / qualifications	Guidance Aiming Higher Teachers Guest speakers	There run at various times throughout the session
August	Post Exam Course Choice and Level Changes	<p>Check class lists and identify pupils at the wrong level</p> <p>Issue change of course/level request forms. Number of people to contribute to filling in.</p> <p>Meet with pupils to discuss changes to course options and timetables in light of exam results</p> <p>Make changes on SEEMIS</p> <p>Manage class sizes and capacity</p>	<p>Class teachers / PTs in discussion with Guidance</p> <p>Guidance</p> <p>Office staff/Timetabler</p> <p>Timetabler</p>	All Guidance and Timetabler in 1F6 with column information
September	Senior Phase Attainment Evening	Information shared in how best to attain which includes making the right choices	Headteacher/Timetabler S4/5/6 Year Heads Senior Pupils	
September / October	Careers Advisor Meeting	Identify low / medium / high risk pupils and arrange careers appointments as appropriate.	Guidance / Careers Advisor	Careers appointments are on an ongoing basis but can be arranged at short notice where required.
October / November	Review of course options process	Update Course Options timeline	Timetabler Guidance Office staff	
Late November	Senior Phase Parents' Evenings	Discussions regarding next steps in learning and possible discussion of future choice / career plans	Class teachers Principal teachers Guidance SLT	
December	Option forms	Preparation of options forms for next session	Timetabler SLT Guidance	

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			PTs	
December / January	S2 / S3 PSE Careers focus	Delivery of lessons related to careers in PSE	Guidance	
January	Option forms	Preparation of options forms for next session	Timetabler	
Late January / Early February	S2 Parents' / Information Evening	Present information to parents on course options Discussions with parents	Timetabler Class teachers Principal teachers Guidance	
Early February	Options forms issued to S2	Meet with pupils to discuss and advise on options.	Guidance	
Early February	S3-S5 Options forms issued	Meet with pupils to discuss and advise on options.	Guidance	
Mid February	Senior Phase Information Evening	Present information to parents on course options	Timetabler	
Late February	S2 Options forms returned	Check forms and if necessary consult pupil/parents to make adjustments before submitting to Timetabler	Guidance	
February	1-1 discussions with pupils	Speak to pupils individually about their course choices in PSE	Guidance	
Early March	S3 –S5 Options Forms returned	Check forms and if necessary consult pupil/parents to make adjustments before submitting to Timetabler	Guidance	
March	Inputting options data	Inputting Options into software	Office staff	
April	Timetabling	Creation of the whole school timetable	Timetabler	
May	Timetabling	Meet with pupils who are getting reserve choices / need to identify alternative subjects	Guidance Timetabler	
May	Timetabling	Inputting subject and pupil information into SEEMIS	Office staff	
Beginning of June	Timetable issue	Assemblies for pupils to pick up their timetable.	Timetabler Guidance	Column information
		Issue change of course/level request	Guidance	

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		forms. Number of people to contribute to filling in.	Timetabler	displayed in 1F6
Early June	Change of Timetable	Check class lists and identify pupils at the wrong level	Principal teachers in discussion with Guidance	
June	Choice and Level Changes	<p>Check class lists and identify pupils at the wrong level</p> <p>Issue change of course/level request forms. Number of people to contribute to filling in.</p> <p>Make changes on SEEMIS</p>	<p>Class teachers / Principal Teachers in discussion with Guidance</p> <p>Guidance Timetabler</p> <p>Office staff/Timetabler</p>	Column information displayed in 1F6

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Portlethen Academy Change of Course Form 2017 / 2018

Name	DCT
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Column	Subject to change	Teacher Signature
Column A		
Column B		
Column C		
Column D		
Column E		
Column F		

Column	New subject	Teacher Signature
Column A		
Column B		
Column C		
Column D		
Column E		
Column F		

Reason for change	
Pupil signature	Guidance teacher signature

Do not go to your new class until you have been issued with a new timetable

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Letter to parents of pupils suggesting a change of level post prelim

Dear Parent / Guardian,

As you will be aware, the prelim examination period is now over and <Name> will have received feedback on how <he/she> has performed.

With this in mind, we are now in a position to highlight recommended changes to SQA presentation level for <Name>. These recommendations can be found attached overleaf.

These changes may already have been communicated to you in their recent report following the prelim examinations or through prior communication with the individual subject teacher. However, if these recommendations have not been communicated to you, they are likely to have been for one or more of the following reasons:

- Initial entry level incorrect at beginning of session
- Poor performance in course assessments
- Poor performance in the prelim examination
- Lack of commitment to the course

We would appreciate if you could discuss this information with your child / ward and return the tear off slip overleaf, confirming that you are happy for the recommended changes to be made.

Tear off slip

Please find listed below the recommended changes of level for <Name>

Subject 1	Previous level	New level
Subject 2	Previous level	New level
Subject 3	Previous level	New level
Subject 4	Previous level	New level

Please return the tear off slip below to at Portlethen Academy by

I agree that I have read the information regarding the recommended changes of presentation level.

I agree/I do not agree (please delete) with the recommendation given.

Please add any relevant comments below:

Signed _____

Print Name _____