



EF ACADEMY



A Level Handbook

OXFORD

Table of Contents

WELCOME TO THE A-LEVEL PROGRAMME.....	3
WHAT TO EXPECT IN YOUR FIRST TERM.....	5
UNDERSTANDING THE A-LEVEL CURRICULUM	6
SUBJECT SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC PATHWAYS	8
THE EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION (EPQ)	10
CAS – CREATIVITY, ACTIVITY AND SERVICE.....	12
ENGLISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT: ACADEMIC ENGLISH AND IELTS.....	14
PREPARING FOR UNIVERSITY.....	16
OXFORD IS OUR CAMPUS – A HOME AWAY FROM HOME	18
WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY	19
KEY PEOPLE TO KNOW	20
YOUR WELCOME CHECKLIST.....	21

Welcome to the A-Level Programme

You're now part of a vibrant international community, learning in one of the world's most academic cities. The A-Level programme at EF Academy Oxford is designed to help you grow into a confident, independent learner — prepared for success at university and beyond.

A-Levels are a demanding and respected qualification, recognised globally. They allow you to specialise in three (sometimes four) subjects and give you the space to explore your interests more deeply than before.

We expect a lot from you — and we'll give a lot back. You'll benefit from:

- Small class sizes and experienced teachers
- 1:1 academic and university guidance
- Structured support to help you grow as a learner
- Opportunities to extend your learning through the EPQ, enrichment, and our Pathways to University

This handbook is here to support you through every stage of your journey — from understanding how grades work, to planning your EPQ, to asking for help when things feel tough. Keep it bookmarked. Refer to it. Make it your own.

You're here because you have the potential to succeed. Let's get started.

A Note from the Head of School

Welcome to EF Academy Oxford.

You've joined a school that takes pride in its academic ambition, its international diversity, and the individual care given to every student. We believe that the A-Level journey is not just about academic success — it's about personal growth, intellectual challenge, and building the skills to thrive in a global world.

You'll be supported, encouraged, and challenged during your time here. Make the most of every opportunity. Ask questions, explore ideas, and aim high.

I look forward to seeing what you'll accomplish in your time with us.

Mark Fletcher-Single

Head of School

A Note from the Deputy Head of School

Welcome to the A-Level programme at EF Academy Oxford.

I'm proud to oversee the academic life of the school, and even prouder to get to know each of our A-Level students. You are here because you've already shown great potential — and now it's time to build on that.

This is a place where you'll be supported to succeed, but also expected to take ownership of your learning. Your teachers, tutors, Pathway Managers, and university guidance team are all here to help you stay on track, stretch yourself, and grow in confidence.

If you have questions — academic or otherwise — ask. We're here to help.

Wishing you an exciting and successful start.

Dona Jones

Deputy Head of School (Academics)

What to Expect in Your First Term

Your first term at **EF Academy Oxford** is a time to settle in, build good habits, and start laying the foundations for your academic journey.

You'll be introduced to new teachers, new expectations, and new ways of thinking. It might feel intense at first — that's normal. But there is plenty of support in place, and by the end of the first term, most students feel confident, connected, and more independent in their learning.

Key Milestones in Term 1

Here's what to expect during your first few weeks:

- **Timetable finalised:** You'll confirm your A-Level subject choices, complete entry assessments, and discuss any adjustments with your Course Coordinator.
- **Academic Tutor assigned:** You'll meet regularly with your Academic Tutor, who will guide you throughout the year and help monitor your progress.
- **Baseline assessments:** You'll complete initial tests, including a CEM baseline, which helps set your individual target grades.
- **Introduction to pathways:** You'll learn more about the five Pathways to University and explore opportunities linked to your interests and future plans.
- **Settling-in report (AG1):** Your first formal report will give early feedback on how you've started your A-Level programme, including grades for effort and assessment.
- **Study skills & university prep:** During tutor time, you'll begin working through a structured programme focused on academic and personal development.

Adjusting to A-Level Study

A-Levels are different from what many students are used to. Lessons are more in-depth, and you'll be expected to take greater responsibility for your own learning — including completing homework, revising weekly, and preparing questions before class.

At **EF Academy Oxford**, we support this shift through:

- **Regular check-ins** with tutors and teachers
- **Supervised study sessions** in the evenings
- **Subject support and booster classes** to help reinforce difficult topics
- **Access to resources** on Google Classroom and ManageBac

Understanding the A-Level Curriculum

At **EF Academy Oxford**, our A-Level curriculum is designed to stretch and support you — helping you become a subject expert while also developing the critical thinking, independence, and resilience you'll need at university.

What are A-Levels?

A-Levels (Advanced Levels) are internationally recognised qualifications typically taken over two years. You'll choose three subjects to focus on in depth, with the option to take a fourth in certain cases.

A-Level courses are linear, meaning your final grades are based on exams taken at the end of your second year. This gives you time to develop real expertise and maturity in each subject — but it also means consistency, organisation, and long-term thinking are essential.

Subjects Offered at EF Academy Oxford

We offer a broad range of subjects, and your final selection will have been agreed with you at the start of the year, based on your interests, academic strengths, and future plans. You may be studying from among the following:

- Art & Design
- Biology
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Economics
- Mathematics
- Further Mathematics
- Physics
- Psychology
- Sociology

A-Level qualifications in native languages (e.g. Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, German, Polish) may also be available. These are subject to demand, timetabling, and additional fees.

Choosing Subjects to Support Your Pathway

At EF Academy Oxford, every student is placed on one of our five **Pathways to University**. These are designed to align your subject choices, academic guidance, and extracurricular opportunities with your future goals.

Here are some common subject combinations matched to their corresponding Pathways:

Pathway	Recommended Subject Combinations
Science, Technology & Engineering	Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry / Biology, Further Mathematics
Bio-Medical Sciences	Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics
International Relations, Economics, Law & Politics	Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Mathematics (for Economics)
Business, Finance & Management	Business Studies, Economics, Mathematics
Arts, Media & Cultural Studies	Art & Design, Psychology, Sociology

We'll continue to check that your subjects align with your goals as your plans develop — and if you're still exploring your options, don't worry. Your Pathway Manager and the University Guidance team will help you keep doors open.

How the Curriculum Supports Your Progress

- **Small class sizes** mean personalised teaching
- **Regular progress checks** help keep you on track
- **Support and extension sessions** allow you to revisit or go beyond the syllabus
- **Integrated university preparation** ensures your subjects and skills match university entry expectations
- **Cross-curricular projects**, fieldwork, and enrichment bring academic learning to life

You'll also be encouraged to take part in **the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)** and **the CAS programme**, both of which extend your skills beyond classroom study and strengthen your university application.

A-Levels are a powerful foundation for university success. At EF Academy Oxford, we'll help you get the most out of them — academically, personally, and professionally.

Subject Support and Academic Pathways

At **EF Academy Oxford**, we believe that personalised support and clear academic direction are key to your success. Every student is different — which is why we've built systems that help you thrive, whether you need stretching, guidance, or encouragement along the way.

Academic Support in Every Subject

A-Levels are rigorous, and it's completely normal to need support at times. Here's how we help:

- **Subject Support Sessions:** Scheduled each week, these optional sessions allow you to revisit material, ask questions, or prepare for upcoming assessments.
- **Booster Classes:** If your teacher feels you'd benefit from more targeted intervention, you may be required to attend booster classes in key areas of your subject.
- **Supervised Study:** Evening silent study sessions run by House Parents to encourage structured homework and revision time. This is also used for academic intervention.
- **Extension Work:** For students aiming for top universities, teachers provide additional reading, problem-solving tasks, and opportunities to engage with content beyond the syllabus.
- **Google Classroom & ManageBac:** Your work, feedback, and resources are all stored digitally, so you always know what's expected of you.

If you're finding a subject particularly challenging, speak to your teacher or Pathway Manager. There are always strategies we can use to support you.

Your Pathway to University

Every student at EF Academy Oxford is placed on one of our five **Pathways to University**. These are designed to align your subjects, academic opportunities, and university preparation with your long-term goals.

Our five Pathways are:

1. **Science, Technology & Engineering**
2. **Bio-Medical Sciences**
3. **International Relations, Economics, Law & Politics**
4. **Business, Finance & Management**
5. **Arts, Media & Cultural Studies**

You'll meet regularly with your **Pathway Manager**, who provides guidance on:

- Subject performance and support
- Enrichment and extension opportunities
- Summer programmes, competitions, and fieldwork
- University course planning and personal statement advice

Each Pathway also runs:

- **Talks by external speakers and alumni**
- **Pathway-based trips and workshops**
- **Opportunities for mentorship, research, and leadership**

You can change Pathways as your interests evolve. What matters is that you're supported in a direction that makes sense for you — and you're given the tools to succeed.

You are not expected to know exactly what you want to do right away. But with the support of your teachers, tutor, and Pathway Manager, you'll get the clarity, confidence, and qualifications to make informed choices about your future.

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

All A-Level students at **EF Academy Oxford** are expected to complete the **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)** — an independent research project that gives you the chance to go beyond the A-Level syllabus and explore something that truly interests you.

Whether you want to investigate a scientific theory, write about an ethical issue, explore an aspect of your culture, or build something creative — the EPQ is your opportunity to shine.

What Is the EPQ?

The EPQ is a stand-alone qualification, equivalent to half an A-Level (an AS Level). You'll choose your own topic, design your project, carry out research, and present your findings.

You can complete your EPQ in one of two formats:

- **A 5,000-word essay or written report**
- **A creative artefact or product**, with a shorter accompanying report (e.g. an art portfolio, documentary, or prototype)

Throughout the process, you'll also keep a detailed log of your decisions and reflections — an essential part of the assessment.

Why It Matters

Completing an EPQ shows that you can:

- Work independently over a sustained period
- Research, analyse, and evaluate information
- Think critically and solve problems
- Manage a large project from start to finish

These are skills that universities — and employers — value highly. Some universities even make **lower A-Level offers** to students who complete an EPQ to a high standard.

It also gives you something unique to write about in your personal statement and to discuss at interview.

Choosing a Topic

You'll receive guidance early in Year 1 on how to select a suitable topic. Good projects are:

- Personal and original
- Connected to your academic or career interests
- Researchable within the timeframe
- Narrow and focused (not too broad or vague)

Examples from recent EF Academy Oxford students include:

- *The impact of social media on mental health in teenagers*
- *Should genetic editing be legalised for human reproduction?*
- *To what extent can climate change litigation hold governments accountable?*
- *A short film on multicultural identity and belonging*

Your EPQ should challenge you — but it should also excite you.

How You'll Be Supported

You won't be doing this alone. You'll be:

- Assigned a **Supervisor**, who will meet with you regularly
- Guided through research, time management, and referencing
- Given access to digital tools and resources for academic writing
- Provided with milestones to help structure your work

Much of the work is completed independently — but support is always there when you need it.

The EPQ is your chance to show initiative, creativity, and academic maturity. It's a challenging journey — but a rewarding one, and one that will set you apart in the eyes of universities.

CAS – Creativity, Activity and Service

At **EF Academy Oxford**, your development as a student goes far beyond the classroom.

All A-Level students are expected to take part in **CAS**, which stands for **Creativity, Activity and Service**. This programme is designed to help you explore new interests, build key life skills, and make a meaningful contribution to your school and wider community.

Although CAS is a formal component of the IB Diploma, we believe its values are just as important for A-Level students. At EF Academy Oxford, we stand by the ethos of CAS — because universities increasingly seek students who are not only academically strong, but also **balanced, reflective, and engaged with the world around them**.

Why CAS Matters

CAS supports your personal and emotional development while helping you build confidence, resilience, and perspective. It also gives you stories and experiences you can share in your **university applications** and personal statement.

Universities want more than just good grades. They want students who:

- Show leadership and initiative
- Work well with others
- Understand global challenges
- Have interests and passions beyond the classroom

CAS helps you build exactly that kind of profile.

What Counts as CAS?

CAS is split into three areas. You'll be encouraged to complete a balanced programme that touches all three:

Creativity	Activity	Service
Drama, music, art, design, creative writing, student publications, photography, podcasting	Sport, fitness, dance, yoga, Duke of Edinburgh Award, team events, wellbeing challenges	Volunteering, peer mentoring, fundraising, environmental initiatives, community outreach

You can also suggest your own CAS experiences — especially if they reflect your identity, future goals, or something you've always wanted to try. If in doubt, speak to your tutor or Pathway Manager.

CAS at EF Academy Oxford

Some recent examples of CAS experiences include:

- Student-led **culture fairs** and international events

- Designing the school's **yearbook and media content**
- Creating a **peer mentoring network** for new students
- Volunteering at **local charities and youth centres**
- Organising panels on **sustainability and global issues**
- Leading clubs in areas like chess, debate, or film

Many of these opportunities are student-led — and if you're ready to take initiative, we're ready to support you.

Recording and Reflecting on CAS

All CAS experiences should be **recorded and reflected on using ManageBac**, our digital learning platform.

You'll be expected to:

- Set meaningful goals and track your progress
- Upload evidence of your participation (photos, summaries, plans)
- Reflect on what you learned, how you felt, and what you achieved
- Meet with your tutor to review your engagement over time

This isn't about collecting hours — it's about developing awareness, confidence, and a sense of purpose.

CAS brings the EF Academy community together. It helps you discover what you care about, connect with others, and demonstrate the kind of well-rounded character that universities and employers are looking for.

English Language Support: Academic English and IELTS

At **EF Academy Oxford**, a strong command of academic English is essential — not only for success in your A-Level subjects, but also for achieving the qualifications needed to study at top universities.

Year 1: Academic English

All students whose first language is not English are expected to attend **Academic English lessons** in Year 1. These sessions are designed to improve your academic literacy across three areas:

- **Reading**, using platforms like ReadTheory to build comprehension and vocabulary
- **Writing**, focusing on structure, clarity, grammar, and critical thinking
- **IELTS foundations**, preparing you for the exam format and question types

The goal is to raise your overall English ability and support your academic writing across all subjects — so that you are fully prepared for the demands of A-Level coursework and university study.

Year 2: IELTS Preparation

In Year 2, students continue into **dedicated IELTS preparation classes**, focusing on the four exam components:

- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking

You will receive personalised feedback, practice test sessions, and support in registering for the IELTS exam. The aim is to help you achieve the **IELTS scores required by your chosen universities**, including:

- **7.0 or above** for courses such as Law, Medicine, and Psychology at top Russell Group universities
- **6.5 overall (with no band below 6.0)** for many undergraduate courses in the UK
- **Higher scores** may be required for courses with competitive entry or strong writing components

Certification and Exit Criteria

Please note that **IELTS certificates are valid for two years**, so it's important that you take the exam at the right time — ideally in the final year of your A-Level studies, before you submit university applications.

Students will remain in the IELTS programme until they:

1. Have **booked and paid** for an IELTS examination
2. Have achieved a **valid certificate** that meets the entry requirements of their university choices

Once these steps are complete, and your score has been submitted and reviewed by the university guidance team, you may be released from the programme.

Attending Academic English and IELTS lessons is not optional. Your university goals — and your success in A-Level subjects — depend on your ability to communicate clearly, fluently, and confidently in English.

If you have questions about your placement or current level, please speak to your Academic Tutor or the Director of University Guidance.

Preparing for University

One of the most exciting — and sometimes overwhelming — parts of your A-Level journey is deciding what comes next. At **EF Academy Oxford**, we make sure that university preparation is not something that happens only in Year 2. It's woven throughout your experience from the moment you arrive.

Our goal is simple: to help you find the right course, at the right university, in the right country — and to make sure you're ready to get there.

How University Guidance Works

Our **Director of University Guidance**, Dr Mark Zumbuhl, works closely with students across both Year 1 and Year 2. From your first term, you'll begin to explore your options and understand what competitive applications look like.

Throughout the year, you'll:

- Meet regularly with the university guidance team for 1:1 and small group sessions
- Take part in **Pathway-specific preparation**, such as workshops, essay support, and test preparation
- Attend university fairs and speaker events
- Learn about **personal statements, application timelines, and reference letters**
- Be guided through the UCAS, Common App, and other global application systems

You'll also have the chance to speak with alumni, meet admissions officers, and ask questions about life at university — from how to choose your course to how to manage your time once you get there.

Year 1: Laying the Foundation

In Year 1, your focus will be on:

- Understanding your interests, strengths, and career ideas
- Learning how subject choices link to university pathways
- Beginning to build a strong academic profile through grades and CAS involvement
- Developing key skills such as academic writing, communication, and self-reflection
- Starting to draft or explore ideas for your **personal statement**

Your **Academic Reports** will include commentary from the university guidance team, outlining the conversations and next steps that will shape your application journey.

Year 2: Making It Happen

In Year 2, you'll work more intensively on your applications. You'll be supported with:

- Finalising your university shortlists
- Drafting and refining personal statements or essays
- Preparing for interviews, entrance exams (e.g. LNAT, BMAT, TSA), and portfolios
- Meeting key deadlines for UCAS, Common App, or other national systems

Deadlines matter — and we'll help you stay organised, focused, and confident throughout the process.

Global Opportunities


Our students apply to universities all over the world, including:

- The UK (e.g. Oxford, Imperial, UCL, LSE, Warwick)
- The USA (e.g. NYU, University of Chicago, UC Berkeley)
- Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, and beyond

Wherever you're applying, we'll help you understand:

- How your A-Levels are viewed internationally
- What admissions teams are looking for
- How to write and talk about yourself in a way that stands out

You'll get out of this process what you put into it — but you're not doing it alone. Our team is here to guide you every step of the way, with personalised advice, honest feedback, and real experience.

 **For more detailed information, timelines, and application support resources, please refer to the EF Academy Oxford University Guidance Handbook.**

Oxford Is Our Campus – A Home Away from Home

Your time at **EF Academy Oxford** will be about much more than A-Level grades. It's also a time for building friendships, discovering passions, and growing as a person.

We are a small, close-knit international school with students from around the world. This diversity brings life to our community — and your experience will be shaped not only by what you learn, but by who you meet, how you live, and how you choose to contribute.

A Home in the Heart of Oxford

Our campus is based in one of the world's most famous university cities — home to centuries of academic tradition, innovation, and discovery. Living and studying here means you'll be surrounded by world-class resources and inspiration every day.

You'll be just a short walk or bus ride from:

- The **Bodleian Library** and **Weston Library**, ideal for quiet study or research
- **Oxford's museums**, including the Ashmolean, Pitt Rivers, and Museum of Natural History
- The beautiful **University Parks** and riverside walks along the Thames and Cherwell
- Independent **bookshops**, cafés, and art galleries
- Historic colleges, cloisters, and university buildings open to the public
- Weekly **markets**, student discounts at local cinemas, and exhibitions at **Modern Art Oxford**

You'll also have access to:

- **Oxford Brookes University facilities**, including study spaces, cafés, and the sports centre
- Regular **evening study sessions** either at Oxford Brookes or on the Cherwell campus until 9pm
- A lively and international student atmosphere, where students from all over the world come to learn and grow

Oxford is not just where you live — **Oxford is your campus**. Use it. Explore it. Let it challenge and inspire you.

Life on Campus

At EF Academy Oxford, life outside the classroom is as important as your study schedule. You'll have opportunities to:

- Take part in **clubs and activities** that reflect your interests or cultural background
- Lead or support **student initiatives**, such as the culture fair, student council, or peer mentoring
- Get involved in music, art, drama, fitness, and community events
- Organise and attend trips to London, Cambridge, Stratford-upon-Avon, and beyond

You'll also be supported by dedicated boarding, wellbeing, and pastoral teams who work closely with the academic staff to ensure you're happy, safe, and thriving.

Balance and Belonging

Studying A-Levels is demanding — but your wellbeing, identity, and sense of belonging matter just as much as your results.

At **EF Academy Oxford**, we are committed to fostering a respectful, inclusive and affirming environment where every student feels seen, valued and supported. Our school community reflects a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, languages, and perspectives — and this diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

We expect everyone to:

- Treat others with kindness and curiosity
- Listen with empathy and communicate with respect
- Stand up against exclusion, prejudice, or unfairness — in any form

We also know that academic success depends on balance. We encourage you to look after yourself through:

- Regular exercise, time outdoors, and creative activities
- Healthy sleep routines and responsible screen use
- Connecting with friends and speaking to trusted adults when needed
- Making time for joy, connection and celebration — not just deadlines

We stand by the ethos of **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)** because we believe that who you are should be your strength — not something you hide or change.

You're not just joining a school — you're becoming part of a global, compassionate, and forward-thinking community of learners, dreamers, and doers.

Welcome to the Journey

Your A-Level experience at **EF Academy Oxford** will be shaped by much more than lessons and exams. You're about to become part of a global, supportive, and ambitious community — and everything you put in, you'll get back tenfold.

You'll learn how to think deeply, act responsibly, lead with integrity, and plan for a future that's truly your own.

We can't wait to see the person you'll become here.

Key People to Know

If you have questions or need support, these are some of the people who can help:

Role	Name	How They Can Help
Deputy Head of School (Academics)	Dona Jones	Academic matters, A-Level guidance, academic reports
Director of University Guidance	Mark Zumbuhl	University planning, personal statements, global applications
Pathway Managers	Alyona Lake & Kate Krivich	Study skills, Pathway Support, academic organisation
Academic Tutors	Assigned to you	Day-to-day support, mentoring, general guidance
Boarding Team Lead	Donna Balsdon	Residential life, wellbeing, support outside of class
Examinations Officer	Beatrice Fanti	Exam timetables, regulations, access arrangements
Inclusion Coordinator	Jenny Turvey	Learning support, access arrangements, SEN provision
Head of Language & Literature	Emma Bardos	Pathway: Arts, Media and Cultural Studies; English & IELTS support
Head of Humanities	Ronan Clarke	Pathways: International Relations, Economics, Law and Politics; Business, Finance and Management
Head of Science	Amy Webber	Pathways: Bio-Medical Sciences; Science, Technology and Engineering
Head of Mathematics	Jocelyn Faulkner	Pathway: Science, Technology and Engineering

Your Welcome Checklist

Before or shortly after arrival, make sure you:

- ✓ Log in to your EF Academy email and Google Classroom
- ✓ Access **ManageBac** and complete your student profile
- ✓ Confirm your A-Level subject selections
- ✓ Meet your **Academic Tutor** and **Pathway Manager**
- ✓ Attend your **orientation sessions** and welcome meetings
- ✓ Explore the Cherwell and Cotuit campuses
- ✓ Register for **Academic English** and/or **IELTS** (if applicable)
- ✓ Join at least one **CAS activity or club**
- ✓ Save key contacts and ask questions — no question is too small

Welcome to EF Academy Oxford. Your A-Level journey starts here.
