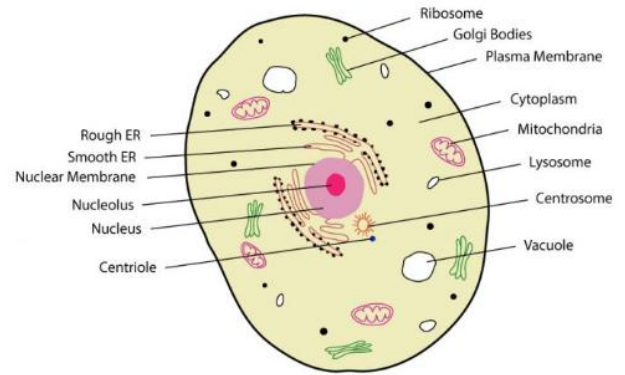
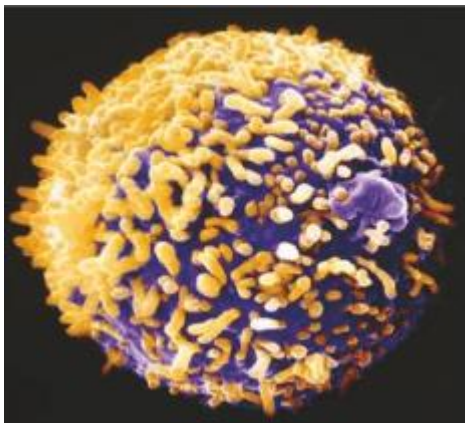




Brunts Academy: 2025-2026 Academic year

STUDENT HANDBOOK

A-Level Biology



The Department:

Mrs. M Saunders – Teacher of Biology

Miss J Brooks - Teacher of Biology

**Mrs Gamble - Teacher of Biology / Faculty
Leader for Science**

Course Outline:

Welcome to your 'A' level biology course.

Course Details:

- You will be following the AQA AS/A level biology specification. The specification is available to print or download at <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/biology/specifications/AQA-7401-7402-SP-2015.PDF>
- The AQA A-level biology course is a linear qualification and assessments take place at the end of the two year course.
- There are 4 units in the AS qualification:
 - Section 1 Biological Molecules
 - Section 2 Cells
 - Section 3 Organisms exchange substances with their environment
 - Section 4 Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms
- There are four additional units for the A-level qualification
 - Section 5 Energy transfers in and between organisms
 - Section 6 Organisms respond to changes in their internal and external environments
 - Section 7 Genetics, populations, evolution and ecosystems
 - Section 8 – The control of gene expression

Assessment and Examinations

Paper 1	+	Paper 2	+	Paper 3
What's assessed Any content from topics 1– 4, including relevant practical skills		What's assessed Any content from topics 5–8, including relevant practical skills		What's assessed Any content from topics 1–8, including relevant practical skills
Assessed - written exam: 2 hours 91 marks 35% of A-level		Assessed - written exam: 2 hours 91 marks 35% of A-level		Assessed - written exam: 2 hours 78 marks 30% of A-level
Questions 76 marks: a mixture of short and long answer questions 15 marks: extended response questions		Questions 76 marks: a mixture of short and long answer questions 15 marks: comprehension question		Questions 38 marks: structured questions, including practical techniques 15 marks: critical analysis of given experimental data 25 marks: one essay from a choice of two titles

Course Overview

Autumn Term	✓ Section 1: Biological Molecules including carbohydrates, lipids, proteins and enzymes, DNA and other nucleic acids ✓ Section 2: Cells including eukaryotic cell ultrastructure, microscopy, transport across cell membranes and the cells of the immune system ✓ Progress Review at end of first half term
Spring Term	✓ Section 3: Organisms exchange substances with their environment including lungs and gas exchange, the heart and circulation, and digestion and absorption ✓ Section 4: Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms, including the structure and function of DNA, genetic diversity and biodiversity
Summer Term	✓ Revision ✓ Mock exams and start of the A2 course

Aims & Expectations:

Our aim is to help you achieve the best possible grade in A Level Biology and help prepare you for the future.

Our commitment to you is:

- To help you achieve through interactive and experimental learning
- To support you with class work and core practical and provide guidance for your independent study
- To provide you with the opportunity to practise exam standard questions (end of unit tests) and full, timed past papers (mocks) before sitting the exams for real

Our Expectations of you:

- Exemplary attendance: if you are away you should catch up with missed work, ideally before your next lesson
- Approach lessons with a positive and focussed attitude and meet deadlines
- Notes: during lessons your teacher may ask you to write some information down but this may not always be the case. It is up to you to make your own revision notes. The purchase of a revision guide may help in this respect.

- Keep an orderly book or file; it is expected that you have a file to show evidence of your working. You will also need to keep an up-to-date lab book for the required practical investigations.
- Complete practice exam questions as part of your independent study – your teacher will tell you where to find these for each topic
- **Take responsibility for your learning.** If you are having difficulties, speak to your teacher as soon as these arise. (Do not expect us to give you special treatment or to make exceptions for you if you don't tell us about a problem until the day before a deadline)
- That you commit at least 1 hour of your time after **each** lesson to review your work (not including the time needed to complete the homework tasks set)
- Complete cover work set during any lessons if your teacher is absent and hand in at the end

Course book

At the start of the year, you will need to buy a copy of the course-specific textbook to support your learning. It is your responsibility to take care of this and bring it to lessons for reference.

Revision Guide:

During the first few weeks of the Autumn Term, we will write to students to offer the purchase of a course-specific revision guide. **We strongly recommend that you purchase this** to help with your revision for your unit assessments. Previous students have found this enormously useful with targeted revision and note taking.

End of topic tests and mock exams:

There are 4 topics within the AS course and each one splits into subtopics which will be assessed in an end-of-topic test, made from past exam questions. You should take these very seriously as your performance will be recorded to help track your progress through the course. If you score below your target level, then you may be asked to re-sit the test in your own time (free or lunchtime). In addition to this a full mock exam will be held prior to exams

Work outside of class:

In the early stages of your course, you will often find that work outside of class is prescribed to you by your class teacher. Usually this will take the form of past paper questions or exam- style questions (from the AQA AS/A level Biology textbook). This book contains a wealth of resources to help you to be successful on your course

In addition to this you should also be keeping good, clear notes about the content outlined in the topic checklists as well as researching further topics of interest to you. **If a biology student says that there is 'nothing to do' then they are lying!!**

As a guide, for each hour that you spend working in class you should spend the same amount of time working outside of class to review/extend the work carried out.

'Exam support' sessions:

As a 6th form student, you are expected to take responsibility for your own learning, working in an independent and mature manner. This is also true for your preparation for external exams as it will be you that drives this, ultimately determining the grade that you achieve.

Most of the input from us (the school) will take place during scheduled lesson time. Over and above the normal range of lessons that we offer at Brunts Academy, we may offer a small number of 'exam support' sessions, though this will depend upon our workloads as subject teachers and will not be guaranteed. If we can then they will take place either at lunchtime or after school in the weeks leading up to the assessments and exams. You will be notified nearer the time of exams.

They are called 'exam support' sessions, as it must be made clear that they are not 'come in, sit down and listen' sessions. Instead, they are drop-in sessions where the agenda is set (very much) by the attendees and the topics and needs or requests that they bring with them at that point in their learning.

Students in previous years have found these to be very useful in supporting them as independent learners; indeed, the open-door and open-agenda nature of the sessions comes at their request. Some students have found them useful as times to get together in small groups of students to work through some problems together. We will not chase students to attend; if they choose not to attend, they miss out.

Support during core practical tasks:

One of the features of our course is to complete 12 required practical investigations. Many students find this a challenging yet stimulating aspect of the course. These practicals are externally assessed in the exam. Practical work is central to any study of biology. For this reason, the required practical activities form a thread linking theoretical knowledge and understanding to practical scenarios. By following this thread, students will build on practical skills learned at GCSE, becoming confident practical biologists and handling apparatus competently and safely.

Final message:

If you are stuck with a particular topic within the course, then please arrange to see one of your teachers (or ask one of the other students in the class) who will be happy to help you further. We are here to try and help you and will do everything practically possible to support you throughout the course.

As an A-level student, you are responsible for your own progress now. It is your responsibility to adapt to the more mature working environment of the Sixth Form and work to overcome any difficulties that you face during your time here. Clearly, there is a strong link between the amount of work done and final grade achieved – please make sure that you work steadily and hard so that you can look back on your time studying A-levels with no regrets....

Further reading (if you wish...):

- CGP Head start to A-level Biology
- CGP - A-Level Biology; Essential Maths Skills