BILBOROUGH
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

A LEVEL BIOLOGY FAQs

Q: What are the entry requirements?

We ask for at least a grade 6 in Biology GCSE or a 6,6 if you have done Combined Science. In addition, you need a grade 6 in one of English Language and higher level Maths and a grade 5 in the other subject.

Q: How many Biology lessons do I have per week?

As with all A level subjects you will have 3 lessons per week for Biology. Each of these is one and a half hours long.

Q: How many teachers will I have?

As far as possible we try to ensure you have 1 teacher in year 12 and 1 teacher in year 13.

Q: Can I take an AS level in Biology?

No. When you sign up to do Biology you will do the full 2 year A level course. You will study 4 topics per year and can find information about the topics you will study in the Springboard document.

Q: What are the lessons like?

For each topic you will be given a booklet which will help you to focus on the key points and develop your exam technique and understanding. These contain various activities as well as course content and as you progress these will also help you to build on ideas you have met earlier in the course. In addition to the booklet work, other activities you will do include practicals (as many as we can fit in), practising exam questions, discussions and group work and even some games such as dominoes and plasticine meiosis.

Q: Do we get much homework?

As with all subjects at college you are expected to average 4.5 – 5 hours of independent study per week. Each week your teacher will send an email outlining the tasks expected that week and this includes areas for recap and reading ahead to help you to really get to grips with the content. There will usually be some exam questions to complete. There should also be some time for you to work on your own targets or areas for improvement.

Q: Is it hard work and how much support can I get?

All A levels are hard work and your final grade often reflects the amount of effort you put in. One difference between A level and GCSE is the amount of content you need to learn so you should be prepared for this at the start. Having said that, there is lots of support available to you if you need help with any aspect of the course. Your teacher is available by email, there are lots of resources on Moodle that you can access at any time and we hold drop in sessions most lunchtimes where you can come along to work or just drop in to ask a quick question.

Q: How are the practicals assessed?

We try to fit in as many practicals as possible throughout the course as the exam requirements are that you are familiar with certain apparatus and techniques. You also need to show that you are competent in various aspects of practical work including following instructions, planning and taking account of variables, safety, recording and gathering data and research and referencing. At the end of the course you will be given a pass or a fail in this component (don't worry, as long as you attend lessons and act on feedback you should have no problem passing).
In addition to this 12 of the practicals are classed as 'compulsory' and may be asked about in the exam papers at the end of the course.

Q: Are dissections compulsory?

There are various dissections during the course but the course requirement is that by the end you have dissected either an animal or a plant organ so if you are not keen on dissections as long as you can dissect a leaf you are fine!

Q: How much plant biology/ human biology is in it?

Many aspects of the biology course are relevant to both plants and animals e.g. mitosis and meiosis, osmosis, cell biology, genetics and evolution etc. We look at transport systems in both plants and animals, how both of them respond to stimuli and aspects of biochemistry such as photosynthesis and respiration. Most of the rest of the course, especially the physiology is human biology such as the heart, lungs, homeostasis, muscles and nervous system.

Q: Which subjects go well with Biology?

Biology is a very diverse subject and goes well with many others. Common combinations include Chemistry, Geography, Psychology, Physics, Maths and PE and these will open the doors to studying a wide

variety of subjects at a higher level. Many students also pick Biology as they want to do one science alongside their other A levels. These subjects range from English Language, History and Law to Art, Music and Drama. Whatever you want to study, Biology A level will allow you to develop many skills that will be useful in later life.

Q: What careers is Biology A level useful for?

Biology is useful for many careers and degree courses, for example this year our students are going on to study medicine, dentistry, anthropology, veterinary science, biological science, nutrition, nursing, physiotherapy and sports science to name but a few. You can find further details on the link in the Springboard document.

Q: What happens if I don't get the grades to do A level biology?

You could have a look at one of our BTEC Applied Science courses. These are what we recommend for students who have not got the grades to do science A levels, or who find they cope better doing some coursework alongside exams. These courses will allow progression to university or an apprenticeship after college.