



**college  
solihull**

# Specialist Academies Guide 2016



# Contents

Specialist Academies Explained	2
Extended Project	3
Gifted & Talented Programme	4
<b>Academies and Projects:</b>	
Accounting & Finance Academy	5
Business Academy	6
Chemistry Nottingham Project	7
Economics Academy	8
Engineering Academy	9
European Languages Centre	10
Humanities Academy	11
Law Academy	12
Media Academy	13
Politics Academy	14
Pre-Medical School	15
Psychology Research School	16
Shakespeare Academy	17
Sociology Academy	18
Teaching Academy	19
Wider Medical Academy	20

## Specialist Academies Explained

Specialist Academies are enrichment options linked to particular subjects or careers. They provide students with opportunities to develop their learning through a programme of seminars, guest lectures and visits out of College.

They may not include scheduled lessons every week and students won't be set homework, but the experiences students get from joining will boost later applications to university or employment.

In some cases, students may be able to get extra UCAS points for their university application by undertaking a piece of personal research in the form of an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Those academies with an EPQ element included are marked with an EPQ symbol (right).



Students must be aware that spaces on these Specialist Academies are limited and applying does not guarantee a place. In most cases, there will be a competitive selection process and students will need to demonstrate that they should get one of the places. A clear commitment to that area of study - including an ambition to continue studying it at university - will help.



## Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

**Course description:** The EPQ is a piece of independent work of a student's choice, which can either be an artefact or an extended piece of academic writing. The focus is on research and planning skills leading to a final piece. There are a number of specialist routes available including through one of the subject academies. Students are encouraged to be creative and innovative. The work completed cannot be connected to any aspect of AS or A2 work. This is assessed at A level standard and as such an A\* is achievable. It boosts university and employment applications.



**Course duration:** January in Year 12 - December in Year 13

**Time commitment:** 1 period per week

**Course costs:** None.

**Who can sign up:** All AS students

**How and when to sign up:** Talks are held during the second half of the Autumn Term. Follow up Q+A sessions are also available. Sign up via Moodle.

# Gifted & Talented Programme

**Course description:** The Gifted & Talented Programme offers:

- extensive support and guidance for UCAS applications to Russell Group universities, especially for highly competitive courses such as Medicine, Law etc.
- preparation for university tests and interviews.
- support with personal statements.
- a place on the G+T Summer School in June.
- extension work opportunities.
- access to Moodle website with links, activities and aptitude tests which will strengthen applications to university.
- a specific programme for those students considering applying to Oxford or Cambridge.

**Course duration:** March of Year 12 - end of Year 13

**Time commitment:** 2 days Summer School in June of Year 12 and attendance at meetings as required.

**Course costs:** None.

**Who can sign up:** Students usually have A/A\* GCSE profile and also:

- have an enthusiasm and interest in their subject and other academic pursuits.
- be proactive and independent.
- have the desire to seek out wider reading and research opportunities.
- take part in some sort of extracurricular activity – this could be the Extended Project Qualification or wider reading or work experience.

**How and when to sign up:** Students with a strong GCSE profile are invited to a meeting to address the key commitments of the programme. Teachers are also asked to nominate any other students who they feel are excelling in their subject area. Interested students then sign up via Moodle.



# Accounting & Finance Academy

**Course description:** If you are interested in a career in either Accounting or Finance then this Academy is for you! You may be interested in progressing onto Accountancy or Finance courses at degree level OR going directly into employment through an apprenticeship or sponsored degree after your A level or BTEC course. Whatever your plans, this Academy can boost your prospects.



The Accountancy & Finance Academy has direct links with employers. Internships and work placements will be available to students. Visits to open days, events and businesses will be organised throughout the year to support students too.

**Course duration:** Mid Autumn Term to the end of Year 12. For students planning to apply for College Leaver Programmes and apprenticeships with employers this will continue through Year 13.

**Time commitment:** Includes after College commitment that will vary from week to week.

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** Students who have an interest in a career in Accountancy or Finance after A levels/BTEC or after a degree course; through employers college leaver schemes /apprenticeships, sponsored degrees or degree study at university level and are keen to develop knowledge of these areas and employability skills. Students may be studying a range of A levels or any BTEC course.

**How and when to sign up:** Most students will sign up for this vocational academy in November of Year 12, although it may be possible to join later in the year.

In the past, students have progressed onto the following organisations:



# Business Academy

**Course description:** With a focus on marketing, this collaboration with Aston University, enables first year A level Business students to develop a marketing strategy for a particular business and make a presentation to a given brief. Students will gather primary and secondary research, identify the target market and develop a strategy to maximise the potential of the business. Members of the Business Academy will have the opportunity to:

- Attend masterclasses at leading Russell Group Universities on topics such as: An Introduction to Game Theory; Is Marketing Taking the Consumer for a Ride; Setting up a Business: Recruiting the Right People.
- Attend the Access to Professions Conference at Aston University to help plan your career and future education.
- Have the possibility to attend a residential challenge at Aston University and join in interactive lectures taught by leading academics.
- Visit Aston University for campus tours and talks on applications to university.
- An opportunity to develop an extended project on a related topic of your choice.
- Support for your project from the academics at Aston University.
- Trips and visits to relevant places of interest (for example Jaguar Land Rover).
- Guest speakers

**Course duration:** November - March

**Time commitment:** Two half-day visits to Aston University, two support workshops, approximately 10 hours to work on group presentation.

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** Year 12 AS Business students.

**How and when to sign up:** Students can self nominate via an in-class letter to attend the first Aston visit.



## Chemistry Nottingham Project

**Course description:** Initially about 50 students visit the University of Nottingham for an afternoon of demonstrations and talks. A smaller group of students are then invited to take part in a practical-based project investigating the characteristics of aspirin and vitamin C. Samples of aspirin are prepared at the College and taken to the University for analysis as part of a full day in the chemistry laboratories, focussing on spectroscopy and analytical chemistry. The group then returns to the University for a third time in June, to present their projects to a small audience of academics and post graduates. This is accompanied by a talk on applying for chemistry degrees and finishes with access to the university Open Day.

**Course duration:** January to June of Year 12.

**Time commitment:** An initial day visit in January, followed by two practical sessions at College and one day visit to carry out practical work at the University. There will also be several time slots to prepare for the final visit to present findings in June.

**Course costs:** Approximately £30 transport costs to the University of Nottingham.

**Who can sign up:** Year 12 Chemistry students who are considering Chemistry careers.

**How and when to sign up:** The initial visit can be signed up for in December. Following the initial visit in January, you can apply for a place. There are only 15 places, it is always oversubscribed.



## Economics Academy



**Course description:** This is an opportunity for students to examine topical issues at a greater depth than at A level and to complete an Extended Project in this subject area. You will be working in conjunction with staff and students at Birmingham & Leicester Universities. There will be a small travel cost involved as we make trips to the universities.



**Course duration:** June of Year 12 - early-April of Year 13

**Time commitment:** 1 period a week for the main sessions and 2-4 hours a week of independent study in completing your Extended Project Qualification.

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** This course is for students intending to study Economics or a closely related subject at a Russell Group university. Whilst most students in the group will be studying A level Economics, it is possible to join the Academy if you intend to follow Economics at university but are not currently studying the subject.

**How and when to sign up:** Most members of this Academy will have been recruited in the final weeks of Year 12, but it is possible to join the group in September with the agreement of the course leader.



# Engineering Academy



**Course description:** The Engineering Academy is for students who are interested in a career in Engineering or wish to experience the different types of Engineering available. Working in conjunction with Coventry University you will get hands on experience of working on real Engineering projects for example by designing and building a relief shelter. You will learn about different types of Engineering, the materials Engineers use and gain valuable transferrable skills such as team work and project management. You will also work with an international company on a specific project which you will present to the company's chief engineers at their offices. In addition there are a number of trips and visits to see Engineering in action such as a trip to the Jaguar Land Rover Plant. Some students will also take part in the summer visit to CERN in Switzerland. Students who have previously enrolled in the Academy have been able to secure work placements at engineering firms.

**Course duration:** October 2016 to July 2017

**Time commitment:** Most Wednesday afternoons in the Autumn term for work with Coventry University. Other half-days for trips and visits in the Spring and Summer terms. Three full days in the summer term for those students going on the CERN trip.

**Course costs:** The total travel costs to Coventry University will be approximately £40-£50. The CERN trip is limited to 20 places and costs approximately £400 (2016 prices).

**Who can sign up:** Any student interested in a career in Engineering who is studying A level Maths or Use of Maths.

**How and when to sign up:** Places on the Academy are limited to 30 students. Students should request a place at their enrolment interview. If places are over-subscribed, names will be pulled out of a hat and students will be notified via Tyber.



# European Languages Centre

**Course description:** All Modern Foreign Language students are automatically part of the Languages Centre. Students complete guided study and conversation, as well as taking part on a number of trips and visits. Pictured below are our A level German students on their recent exchange trip with partner school, Albert-Einstein-Schule in Schwalbach, near Frankfurt.

**Course duration:** All year

**Time commitment:** It will vary from week to week

**Course costs:** The optional trips and visits (including those abroad) do incur travel costs, which vary from trip to trip.

**Who can sign up:** Only Modern Foreign Language students

**How and when to sign up:** No need to sign up; all Modern Foreign Language students will be automatically enrolled to this.



# Humanities Academy

**Course description:** This is a specialist enrichment activity which supports students interested in applying for a Humanities-related course at university, or employment in a related industry, to deepen and broaden their experience of Humanities by working with national universities. The Academy has links with Salford, Nottingham and Leicester Universities that will support and guide the students projects. The projects will be ideal material for an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and students will be encouraged to create an EPQ that will support their career and university progression routes.



**Course duration:** Mid-Autumn term to the end of Year 12

**Time commitment:** Some after College commitment; varies from week to week.

**Course costs:** Possible charges for trips and visits, but this will vary from year to year.

**Who can sign up:** Any very enthusiastic Humanities student, with ambitions to study their Humanities subject/s or a new Humanities area subject such as Philosophy, Archaeology, Anthropology or Egyptology at University.

**How and when to sign up:** Year 12 Humanities students will have the opportunity to complete the Moodle application form in September 2016. There are only 15 places available.



# Law Academy

**Course description:** Members of the Law Academy will have the opportunity to attend masterclasses at leading Russell Group Universities on topics such as assisted dying and the death penalty as well as participating in the 'How to get to the Bar' Law conference at St Philips' Chambers working with judges and lawyers. They will have the chance to attend a residential challenge at Aston University and an opportunity to develop an extended project on a related topic of their choice. Trips and visits to relevant places of interest (for example New York; Parliament; the Supreme Court, the Magistrates' Court and the Court of Appeal and the theatre) are also included as well as guest speakers, including solicitors, barristers and former students.

**Course duration:** October - June

**Time commitment:** Variable

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** AS Law students

**How and when to sign up:** Students will be given the chance to sign up via AS Law lessons.



# Media Academy



**Course description:** Students studying our Media courses can benefit from recently established links with the University of South Wales's School of Media. This gives them the opportunity to receive extra guidance and mentoring, visits from staff and reciprocal visits to the University's Cardiff Campus. The Media Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) provides opportunities for students to investigate personal media interests. To aid the pupils' productions the department has a dedicated editing suite, with top of the range cameras and filming equipment. The EPQ is a free standing qualification. It involves choosing a topic and carrying out in-depth research into that particular area. It requires a high level of independent work and original thought – skills which universities value highly in school leavers. The work, which is worth the equivalent of half an A level, is usually presented as a 5,000 word report in an academic subject outside a student's main programme of work. The EPQ can be offered as a Media practical project whereby an artefact and 1000 word report are produced. All students are mentored in the Extended Project Qualification.



**Course duration:** September 2016 – May 2017

**Time commitment:** 1 period per week.

**Course costs:** Charges for trips, but this will vary from year to year.

**Who can sign up:** Year 13 Media students.

**How and when to sign up:** Places on the Academy are limited to 20 students. Applications to be made via Moodle to AS Media Co-ordinator/ Teacher Rasbinder Gill by September 2016.

University of  
South Wales  
Prifysgol  
De Cymru

# Politics Academy

**Course description:** This programme provides an opportunity to attend five university lectures at the University of Birmingham (as pictured right) on themes common to all Russell Group Political Science degrees. In addition, students will complete an Extended Project on a political theme of their own choosing. Students on the Academy may also contribute to the YourGov Politics magazine.

# UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



**Course duration:** June of Year 12 - early-April of Year 13

**Time commitment:** 1 period a week for the main sessions and 2-4 hours a week of independent study in completing your Extended Project Qualification.

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** Students interested in taking political science at university (please note you do not have to be studying A level Politics to qualify for the Academy, but you do need to have an excellent track record of commitment to your studies).

**How and when to sign up:** Send a Tyber message to Assistant Curriculum leader for Social Sciences in the Spring term of Year 12.



# Pre-Medical School



**Course description:** The Pre-Medical school is an enrichment activity designed to support students who have serious and realistic aspirations to study medicine at university. Through a series of lectures, visits and practical activities, students will strengthen their understanding of the medical profession and develop a greater appreciation of the essential skills and relevant experience required for a successful university application.



Activities undertaken as part of this academy include:

- University masterclasses
- Visiting speakers from universities eg. Leicester, Keele and Birmingham
- Input from the college careers adviser
- Attendance at University of Birmingham Christmas Medical Lectures
- Problem-based learning activity with Keele University

- Radiotherapy day at University of Liverpool
- Day of hands-on practical activities at Keele University
- Visit to hospital laboratory
- BMAT and UKCAT preparation
- Advice on the application process and an opportunity to question a medical student – University of Birmingham

Places are limited and successful applicants will be required to take an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in a relevant medically-related field.

**Course duration:** Mid Autumn term to the end of Year 12

**Time commitment:** Includes some after College commitment, which will vary from week to week.

**Course costs:** Occasional transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** Very able students who have a serious aspiration to apply for a medical degree.

**How and when to sign up:** Membership is assigned via a selection process. Students are asked to express interest towards the end of the first half term. There are only 15 places and it is always oversubscribed.

# Psychology Research School



**Course description:** Psychology students who join this specialist enrichment will have the opportunity to work with Dr Liz Blagrove from the University of Warwick.



This opportunity gives students the chance to investigate the science behind Psychology. In the first instance, students will replicate one of Dr Blagrove's own studies; then students will develop their own research project.

This enrichment leads to an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), giving students the chance to boost their university application with extra UCAS points.

**Course duration:** July 2016 – April 2017

**Time commitment:** One period per week, and termly visits to the University of Warwick.

**Course costs:** Students are asked to contribute travel costs to Warwick.

**Who can sign up:** Year 13 Psychology students.

**How and when to sign up:** Initial interest logged during Year 12, then students are required to write a short essay about Psychology in the news based on specific criteria. This is a competitive process.



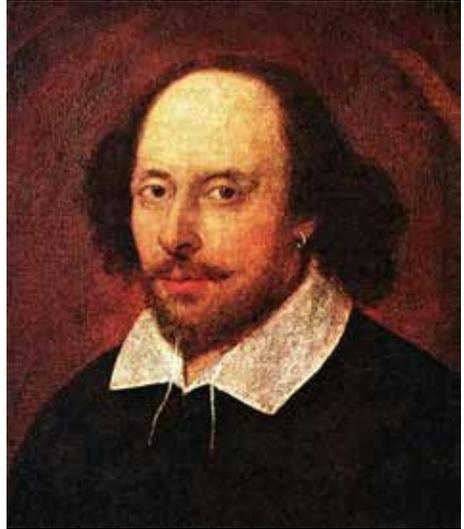
# Shakespeare Academy

## Course description:

- Are you an English Literature student?
- Are you passionate and serious about your English studies?
- Do you have As or A\*s in your Literature & Language GCSEs and a GCSE point score of 6.5 or above?



If so, then you are warmly invited to apply for membership of The Shakespeare Academy, a programme of trips, seminars and activities designed to provide you with exciting and exceptional skills and knowledge, which will give you a huge advantage when applying to university.



You will focus on three Shakespeare texts during the course of the year and the productions you see and the seminars you attend will all relate to those texts. You will also complete an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which could take any form, from an essay to a magazine to a piece of artwork.

The Academy is sponsored by Warwick, Keele and Birmingham Universities. If selected, you will receive tailored tuition and study support from Shakespeare professors at all three universities.

**Course duration:** Mid Autumn term to the end of Year 12

**Time commitment:** Includes after College commitment, which will vary from week to week.

**Course costs:** Approximately £45 towards the cost of transport and tickets to productions and screenings.

**Who can sign up:** Very able students on our A level English Literature and English Language courses, often with ambitions to study English at university.

**How and when to sign up:** Students on the A level English Literature and English Language courses can apply in September. There are only 15 places available.



## Sociology Academy



**Course description:** This programme provides an opportunity to attend several sessions delivered by university specialists at the Universities of Birmingham and Leicester, on themes that will take you beyond the A level specification. In addition students will complete an Extended Project on a sociological theme of their own choosing. Undergraduate mentors support students on this programme.

**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**  **University of Leicester**

**Course duration:** June of Year 12 - early-April of Year 13

**Time commitment:** 1 period a week for the main sessions and 2-4 hours a week of independent study in completing your Extended Project Qualification.

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** Students interested in taking Sociology or a closely related subject at a Russell Group university (please note you do not have to be studying A level Sociology to qualify for the Academy, but you do need to have an excellent track record of commitment to your studies).

**How and when to sign up:** We recruit for this course in the final weeks of Year 12 through conversations between class teacher, the Curriculum Leader and the students concerned.



# Teaching Academy

**Course description:** Interested in a career in teaching? This might be for you!



The Teaching Academy is for anyone interested in becoming a teacher (either nursery school, primary or secondary). The Academy will explain the different routes into teaching and help you find work placements in schools.

With links to local schools and universities, the Teaching Academy exists within the College's Career Passport scheme, which supports students to develop their employability skills through Professional Development Activities. This can include internship placements, masterclasses and talks. It will help to demonstrate your commitment to a career in teaching and your future career progression goals when applying for university. You will also have the opportunity for a practice interview.

**Course duration:** September 2016 - September 2017

**Time commitment:** The time commitment will vary week to week. There will be opportunities to attend talks by speakers, visit local universities, have a practice interview and attend a work placement at a local school.

**Course costs:** There may possibly be some local transport costs.

**Who can sign up:** Students who are interested in becoming a teacher.

**How and when to sign up:** Most students will sign up for this vocational academy in September Year 12, although it may be possible to join later in the year.

## Wider Medical Academy

**Course description:** Interested in medical careers such as Medicine, Nursing etc? This might be for you!



With links to local hospital trusts, dentists and pharmacies, the Wider Medical Careers Academy exists within the College's Career Passport scheme, which supports students to develop their employability skills through Professional Development Activities. This can include internship placements, masterclasses, trips and talks. Completing these activities will demonstrate your commitment to a career within Medicine, Nursing, Ophthalmology and a range of Medical Careers and demonstrate your future career progression goals when applying for University.

**Course duration:** Mid-Autumn term to the end of the UCAS application process in Year 13.

**Time commitment:** Includes after College and holiday period commitment that will vary from week to week.

**Course costs:** There may be some travel costs involved in visits to local hospitals.

**Who can sign up:** Students interested in the careers listed above.

**How and when to sign up:** Most students will sign up for this vocational academy in September Year 12, although it may be possible to join later in the year.

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