

business

A Level

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Exam board: Pearson Edexcel



What is this subject about?

Have you ever wondered how Ryanair can sell its plane tickets for a fraction of the price charged by airlines such as BA and still be a highly profitable business? Or why changes in external factors can affect the performance of businesses such as Tesco and John Lewis? And why Tata Group bought Jaguar Land Rover? Or why Primark should behave in a more socially responsible way? Would you like to understand what strategies firms such as Apple and Starbucks employ in order to achieve global success whereas strategies used by Nokia and Sony have been less effective? If you decide to study Business you will be able to answer these questions and a whole lot more.

What will I study over the two years?

In the first year you will study 'Marketing and People' and 'Managing Business activities'. You will learn how businesses might improve their competitiveness and profitability by adapting their marketing mix, managing their employees and finances effectively, and by using their resources efficiently. You will also study the effects of changes in the business cycle and economic factors.

In the second year you will study two additional themes of 'Business Decisions and Strategy' and 'Global Business'. You will consider more complex business scenarios and focus on the strategies of global corporations. You will examine how multinational businesses operate to achieve their objectives and assess the impact of economic, social, political, ethical, legal, environmental and technological factors on these corporations. You will also analyse the ways in which businesses can manage change successfully when responding to changing external forces and a competitive environment.

How is the course assessed?

Assessment is by three written exam papers. Exams are comprised of data response questions, extended open-response questions and essays.

What skills will I need and develop in this course?

You will need good written skills for essay writing and a genuine interest in business news. Strong numerical skills and the desire to learn how to calculate, interpret and use data is essential. You will develop a range of invaluable skills including case study and data analysis, problem-solving and logical reasoning. Above all Business encourages you to develop mature and rational decision-making skills.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

Degrees in business-related courses such as Business Management, Accountancy, International Business and Marketing and related subjects such as Economics. Business prepares you for a variety of careers including marketing, banking, accountancy, finance, law and management consultancy. A Business qualification can make you an attractive candidate in many fields.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general criteria that the college requires, you will need to achieve a minimum of:

- Grade 4 in GCSE English Language
- Grade 4 in GCSE Maths
- Grade 4 in GCSE Business Studies (if the subject is taken)

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

Students are provided with a range of support both in and out of the classroom to enable each individual to realise their potential. In addition, the department has run a number of trips in both the first and second year. The department aims to offer the opportunity for students to attend a revision conference with examiners. We also offer a number of external speaker on relevant topics, for example global marketing and how business manages change.

Subject combination advice:

Business combines well with a very wide range of subjects including Economics, English, Maths, History, Geography, Media Studies, PE, Politics, Psychology, languages and science subjects. A very limited number of universities prefer students not to study Business and Economics (mainly Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol) but students who have studied both at A Level have gone on to leading universities such as Birmingham, Exeter, Manchester and Southampton. Some university courses prefer Business to be studied alongside A Level Maths.

What is the difference between Business and Economics?

What makes Business and Economics different from one another is their different approaches. The example of their contrasting approaches to employment issues illustrates the differences between the subjects:

- In Business students consider how workers and their wages affect companies in term of costs, competitiveness and profits. For example, high UK labour costs led to Dyson relocating its manufacturing facility to Malaysia in order to remain profitable; or the cause and impact of industrial action at British Airways; or how Nissan's use of lean production techniques resulted in a highly productive UK workforce which improved the firm's competitiveness and success.
- In Economics, however, students investigate why workers are paid different wages because of differences in their skills and the scarcity of their skills. Students also consider how government policy has attempted to encourage people to take up paid employment, and has dealt with the issue of migration or changes in the population.