

# Senior Phase

## S4/S5 into S5/S6 Personalisation and Choice

A Guide for Pupils, Parents and Carers



FIDELIS · JUSTUS · PRUDENS

**St. Joseph's Academy**

January 2026

Dear Pupil,

In the coming weeks, you will take part in a programme to help you make informed choices about your learning in S5 or S6.

Through this programme you will have an opportunity to reflect on the following:

- your own strengths and interests
- the importance of keeping an open mind about possible pathways
- how to find and use career resources in school

All options material, including support videos and presentations, will be shared with you via Glow in early January. Options interviews will take place over the course of this month and will be undertaken by Pastoral Care Teachers.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Buchanan  
Acting Head Teacher

## **For pupils moving from S5 into S6**

The majority of the content contained within this booklet relates to progression from S4 to S5. While much of the content is still relevant to you, you can find information that is specific to next year's S6 on pages 14 to 18 and from page 25 onwards. There is also a video on SCQF provision on page 5 which may be of interest.

## **For pupils moving from S4 into S5**

By this stage, you will have an idea of your presentation level in each of your S4 subjects. You may also have an idea of what you would like to take next session and may be starting to form an idea of the pathway you would like to follow after school.

### **Understanding S4 Presentation Levels and progression to S5**

#### **National 3**

There are no final exams, and all of your work is marked in school. You will either pass or fail a National 3 course. National 3 content aligns with the content level covered during S3. Progression from National 3 is National 4 or SCQF4 courses.

#### **National 4**

There is no exam in a National 4 course. Your work is assessed in school, and you can either pass or fail a National 4 course. If you pass a National 4 course in S4 then you may progress to the National 5 course in that subject during S5. In some cases, progression to National 5 in the same subject may not be the best course of action. Sometimes, alternative SCQF courses or supplementary National 4 qualifications may be better suited to your needs. Each case can be examined and discussed with pastoral care and principal teachers on a pupil-by-pupil basis. We always promote progression to the next SCQF level where possible, and would advise considering SCQF5 level courses (including National 5s) if you have passed National 4 in S4.

## National 5

National 5 courses are on offer in many subjects. As part of most National 5 courses you will sit an exam at the end of S4. The marks you gain in this exam will be added to coursework tasks to determine your final grade. The course is graded using the letters A, B, C, D and F. Progression from an 'A' or 'B' at National 5 will usually allow pupils to undertake Highers in S5. In some subjects 'C' passes also result in viable progression to Highers, in others, a 'C' at National 5 may indicate that passing the equivalent course at Higher will be a significant challenge.

## Progression

S4	S5	S6
National 3 	National 4 or  SCQF4 Courses	National 5 or SCQF5 courses
National 4 	National 5  Or SCQF5 Courses	Higher or SCQF6 Courses
National 5 	Higher 	Additional Highers or Advanced Highers, or SCQF7 courses

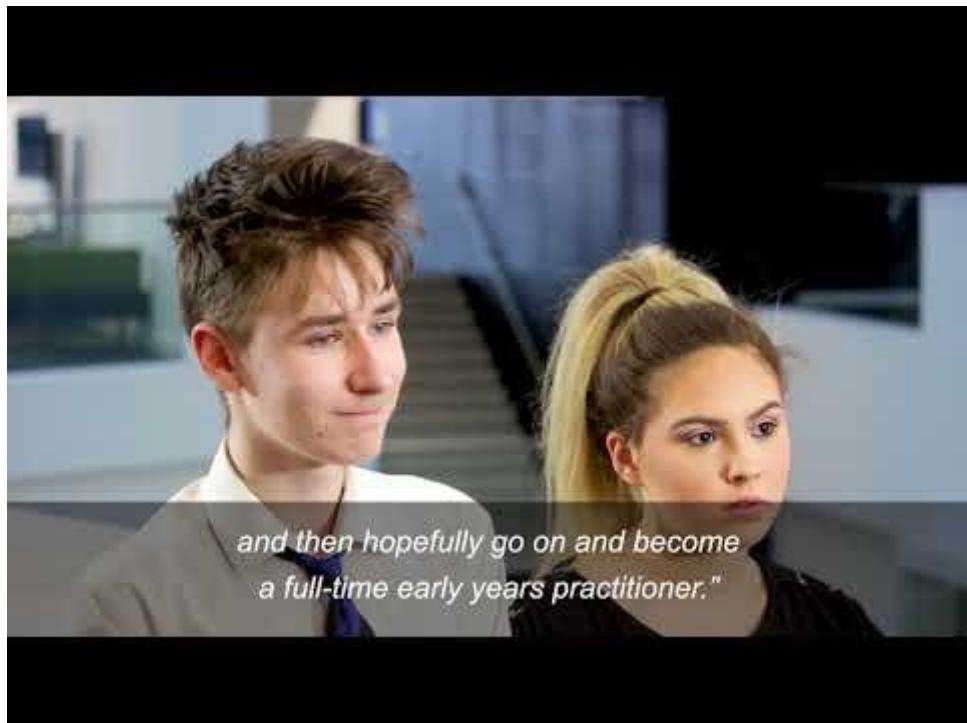
## Pathways

### SCQF Qualifications v National 4, National 5 and Higher

We are keen that parents/carers have an awareness of the range of qualifications on offer over and above traditional National 4, National 5, and Higher courses.

SCQF stands for Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and is designed to help individuals understand and compare qualifications in Scotland.

While most people may think SQA courses are the only SCQF courses on offer at school, this is not the case. There are several courses that sit on the same SCQF level as National 4, National 5 and Higher courses. This information video can help pupils and parents/carers better understand the variety of courses on offer within the SCQF framework.



Later in this booklet you will find more information on the range of additional courses we offer against the SCQF framework. Ayrshire College also offer a range of SCQF courses, some of which you can study alongside school courses.

The rest of this section provides examples of what you may wish to consider if you have a progression pathway in mind.

## I wish to attain five Highers in S5 so that I can apply for University

In order to sit five Highers in S5, you must have at least five National 5 passes in S4. To maximise your chances of attaining five Highers, you will often need to attain at least a grade 'B' in five subjects in S4.

### Example

#### S4 Attainment

N5	English	B
N5	Maths	B
N5	Chemistry	A
N5	PE	No award
N5	Design and Manufacture	A
N5	Physics	B
N5	Modern Studies	C

#### S5 Choices

Higher English  
Higher Maths  
Higher Physics  
Higher Chemistry  
Higher Design and Manufacture

While the above example is illustrative, progression to PE in S5 would not make sense if you were unable to pass the course in S4.

We recommend you prioritise subjects in the order shown below (presuming you have passed N5 courses in S4):

- Those subjects listed as entry requirements for the university course(s) of your choice
- Those subjects where you are predicted to attain an 'A' or a 'B' pass at National 5 level
- Those subjects you are good at
- Those subjects you enjoy

## Do I need to attain to a particular level at N5 to start a Higher course in S5?

The answer to this question is not always the same for every pupil. However, experience shows that for most pupils, it is necessary to attain to the levels shown below to have a *realistic* chance of progressing at the next level.

S4	S5
National 5 A or B Pass	 Higher Course
National 5 C	 1 to 1 Interview for Higher course or select an alternative, ideally another Higher that is more accessible against your prior attainment, or an SCQF6 course
National 5 D or No Award	 Repeat National 5 course, select an alternative N5 course or an SCQF5 course

In general, we advise that those pupils studying National 5s prioritise taking subjects that they are predicted to attain an 'A' or a 'B' in by the end of S4. This will protect against the risk of trying to progress to a level that may not suit your needs or talents.

Striking the right balance between supporting young people and providing advice that will be in their best interests is important and central to our personalisation and choice process.

### What is the advice about requiring an 'A' or 'B' at National 5 based upon?

The latest robust SQA progression statistics for those moving from a 'C' at N5 to Higher is shown on the next page. In some subjects, such as Art, Music, PE and Geography, those with a 'C' at N5 have a good chance of passing the Higher course. However, in Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Spanish and Computing, progression is more of a challenge, whereby pupils with a 'C' in S4 have less than a 30% chance of progressing to a pass at Higher.

We acknowledge that statistics do not give an absolute predictor of future attainment. We are always delighted when a young person goes on to pass a course that the statistics suggest they may not pass. However, we do have a duty of care to be open and transparent around progression prospects, so as not to provide advice that is misleading.

<b>S4 'C' Pass at National 5</b>	<b>Progression to an 'A' to 'C' pass at Higher</b>
Music Technology	68%
ESOL	65%
Music	56%
Business Management	54%
PE	52%
Modern Studies	52%
Geogrpahy	51%
Drama	49%
Art and Design	47%
RMPS	45%
Graphics	42%
Physics	36%
Maths	30%
Applications of Maths	29%
English	29%
French	27%
Spanish	27%
Computing	24%
History	24%
Biology	22%
Chemistry	21%

Statistics shown refer to data released in 2025, and available from – [SQA Progression Data](#) .

This data is released in late January every calendar year, and updated here in advance of Information Evenings.

Parents/Carers and pupils should ponder the above statistics when considering subject choices for those wishing to secure places at university.

The above is by no means to suggest that progress from a 'C' is not at all possible, but it is important to consider the SQA data when making decisions. In some subjects, moving from a 'C' to a Higher pass is extremely challenging.

## **I wish to attain a mixture of Highers and National 5s in S5**

Some pupils may decide that they have a better chance of attaining the grades needed for a university course over two years. Others may wish to build a portfolio of qualifications over two years before applying for college courses or foundation, modern or graduate apprenticeships.

For this reason, you may wish to focus on a mixture of National 5/SCQF5 and Higher/SCQF6 courses next session. Please note that some University courses will prioritise attainment in S5, but there are university pathways available that support Higher level attainment over two years.

### **Example** **S4 Attainment**

N5 Maths D  
N5 English B  
N5 History A  
N5 Art C  
N4 Biology Pass  
N5 Chemistry C  
N4 Music Pass

With similar attainment to the above, you may feel that attempting five Highers in one sitting next year would cause stress and lead to lower attainment across all five subjects. You may then decide to take:

Higher	English
Higher	History
Higher	Art
N5	Maths (Repeat)
N5	Music or Biology or Chemistry or an SCQF5 course

You could then plan to sit additional Highers in S6, including Higher Maths and Higher Chemistry.

## **I want to stay in school in S5, but don't think University is the right pathway for me, what are my options?**

Where your attainment in S4 could lead to the possibility of attaining Highers, we recommend that you progress to sit Highers. However, in some cases, you may not feel that progression to university is in your best interests or possible in the short term.

You could decide to take a mixture of Highers, SCQF5/6 courses and National 5s as outlined above, or you could decide to apply for college courses, whereby you sit four subjects in school and a college course. This can open up pathways to courses at college after school.

### **Example**

#### **S4 Attainment**

National 4 Maths Pass  
National 4 English Pass  
National 4 Biology Pass  
National 4 PE Pass  
National 4 Music Pass  
National 5 Art B  
National 4 Computing Pass

#### **Choices in S5**

National 5 Maths  
National 5 English  
Creative Thinking  
Higher Art  
College Provision related to Music, Computing, Biology **or** N5 Music, Computing or Biology

## Can I take college courses in S5?

Yes, for some pupils, college courses mixed with in-school courses are the correct pathway in S5/6. It is important to consider the level of study. Even if you wish to apply for a school/college course, you must **still select five school subjects**. Selecting a school/college course is an additional 6th subject. This to guard against not being accepted onto the chosen college course and then being interviewed after the timetable is made, which would reduce your options. Ayrshire College have their own selection process, which can include application form/personal statement, interviews and skills/aptitude tests. If successful, pupils then have the option to take up their college place, however this will be instead of the school course which is timetabled for Tuesday and Thursday Periods 6 & 7.

School/College Courses on offer next session at Kilmarnock are as follows:-

SCQF Level 4 Courses	SCQF Level 5 Courses	SCQF Level 6 & 7 Courses
-NPA Software Development (SCQF4)	-Early Education and Childcare (SCQF5)	-NPA Software Development (SCQF6)
-Introduction to the Construction Industry (SCQF4)	-SVQ 2 Performing Engineering Operations - General Engineering (SCQF5)	-NPA Psychology (SCQF6)
-Early Education and Childcare (SCQF4)	-Mental Health and Wellbeing (SCQF5)	-Foundation Apprenticeship - Aeronautical Engineering (Level 6) - 2 year course (Ayr)
-SVQ1 Performing Engineering Operations (SCQF4)	-NPA Hospitality (SCQF5)	-Foundation Apprenticeship - Electrical Engineering (Level 6) - 2 year course (Kilwinning)
-Automotive Skills (SCQF4)	-NPA Sport and Fitness – Football (SCQF5)	-HNC Sports Coaching and Development Infill (SCQF7)
-Skills for Work Uniformed Services (SCQF4)		-HNC Applied Sciences (SCQF7)
-Hair and Beauty (SCQF4)		
-NPA Professional Cookery (SCQF4)		

Pupils sign out of school during lunch and walk to Kilmarnock College for a 2pm start. College finishes at 4pm, therefore this may cause transport issues for any pupils who use school buses.

## **Can I take SCQF6 or SCQF7 (Higher/Advanced Higher equivalent) courses in S5?**

Theoretically yes, but we would need to discuss this with you during your options interview. It is sometimes appropriate and in your best interests, but it depends upon your intended destination after school and your prior and projected attainment in S4. If, for example, you were planning on applying for certain university courses, it may be better to attain five school based Highers. You can see a list of SCQF6 and SCQF7 College courses on page 14.

## **Ayrshire College Application Process**

Staff from Ayrshire College will visit school in the coming weeks to assist with the application process.

School staff will provide support and guidance. You may be invited for interview and Ayrshire College will decide who is accepted on to each course. However, the process of completing an application is the responsibility of pupils and parents/carers.

You can find out more about the application process here -

<https://www1.ayrshire.ac.uk/apply/the-application-process>

## **School-Based SCQF alternatives to traditional National 5 and Higher Courses in S5 or S6**

The subjects listed below sit on the SCQF framework but are not ‘traditional’ N4 or N5 courses.

For these subjects in particular, viability is a real consideration in that they can only run if a certain number of pupils elect to take the subject. These courses can be used to supplement National 5 and Higher awards and as alternatives to College in the event that applications to study college courses are unsuccessful.

- NPA Criminology
- Creative Thinking
- Musical Theatre
- Sport and Recreation and Sports Leadership (Integrated Course)
- Personal Finance
- Health Sector

Overviews of the content covered in the courses listed above can be found with subject-by-subject on the school blog.

## **College in S6 (and for S5 considering SCQF6 courses in S5 rather than SCQF4 or SCQF5)**

Ayrshire College will offer courses at SCQF6 (Higher equivalent).

SCQF6 and SCQF7 courses are generally offered to S6 pupils and would involve splitting time between school and college.

If you would like to consider SCQF4 or SCQF5 college courses, please see bullet point list on page 11.

- NPA Software Development (SCQF6/H)
- HNC Applied Science (SCQF7/AH) – One full day out of school, aimed at S6
- HNC Sports Coaching (SCQF7/AH) – One full day out of school, aimed at S6

All courses listed are subject to change depending upon College confirmation.

## Courses at Kilwinning and Ayr Campuses

We do not recommend signing up for courses based at either Ayr or Kilwinning while also trying to attend school in Kilmarnock. However, in a very small number of cases, we understand that doing so may be the correct decision. If, having considered what the College offer, you feel you do wish to pursue a course at either Ayr or Kilwinning, please speak directly to your Pastoral Care teacher.

## Foundation Apprenticeships

Foundation Apprenticeships are a Skills Development Scotland (SDS) initiative, providing new, work-based learning opportunities for learners in their senior phase of secondary education. Foundation Apprenticeships enable young people to complete elements of a Modern Apprenticeship while still at school.

In the past, pupils had to access college provision to complete a Foundation Apprenticeship. However, some are now on offer within schools.

While there are no entry requirements, pupils should be prepared to work at around Higher level (SCQF6). Universities are now recognising the completion of a Foundation Apprenticeship as equivalent to a Higher qualification.

Progression **can** lead to a Modern Apprenticeship or Graduate Apprenticeship, whereby you take up employment upon leaving school and have the chance to complete accredited work-based qualifications.

Should you wish to undertake a Foundation Apprenticeship, you could be out of school for up to two days per week depending on the structure of the course. As you would be out of school for two days per week, you would likely miss out on significant elements of internal courses. You need to carefully consider the impact that missing two days of school every week will have on your ability to complete courses in school. Nevertheless, this is a fantastic opportunity for pupils who know that they wish to pursue a career in an area related to your chosen Foundation Apprenticeship.

If interested in a Foundation Apprenticeship offered by Ayrshire College, you would need to apply to Ayrshire College. You can check Ayrshire College's dedicated Foundation Apprenticeship catalogue here:

[Foundation Apprenticeships | Ayrshire College](#)

## **Can I take a subject I have not studied in S4 when I move into S5?**

We do not advise that young people moving into S5 crash school-based subjects. Courses in S5 build upon prior learning in S4 and allow for progression. In a small number of cases, senior staff may advise that you take on a new subject as a form of sideways progression (e.g., to attain an SCQF5 award in another subject where progression to Higher is not advisable). In the case of Technical subjects e.g. Practical Woodworking and Graphics, we will consider a crash in a similar subject type in S5 due to ongoing staffing constraints in Technical.

## **Is there any advice that I should follow when choosing my subjects?**

Yes, this is an important time of your school life, and you should speak to your teachers, family, and our careers adviser (Miss Faulds) about your thoughts and ideas. In general, it is important to consider the following when making your choices:

### **Your skills, talents, and interests**

You should think carefully about your own God given skills and talents. Some of us are very creative, others very sporty, some enjoy problem solving, others reflective writing or number processing. Think about what you are naturally good at. It is also important to think about subjects that capture your attention or interests outwith school.

### **Your family**

Your family know you best and always have your best interests at heart. The advice that you receive from your family plays an important role in the subject choices that you make. Take time to talk to your family about your choices. Ask those at home to help you decide if you are not sure. Your family will also have an idea of your progress based upon your homework and school reports. Often the advice that your family can provide is crucial at this time of your life.

There are some great resources available to families as they help their son/daughter make subject choices.

## **My World of Work**

### Making option choices | My World of Work

My World of Work is a Skills Development Scotland service that provides a unique mix of resources, features and job information to help people discover more about themselves and the future world of work. You can also access My World of Work from Glow. There are already several MYWoW ambassadors within our current S3 cohort who will be available to help S4/S5 pupils to access the site during lunchtimes next week. We strongly encourage parents/carers to use this site with pupils.

## **National Parent Forum for Scotland**

### Nationals in a Nutshell Series – National Parent Forum of Scotland (npfs.org.uk)

The National Parent Forum for Scotland website contains a series titled ‘Nationals in a Nutshell’. The online guides can be used to find out more about National 4, National 5 and Higher qualifications.

## **Young Applicants in School Scheme (S6)**

### YASS

The Open University offer S6 pupils the chance to complete course modules at SCQF7 (Advanced Higher equivalent) level. The link above provides more detail and there is a section later in this document where S6 pupils can find out more. Mrs Shearer leads on YASS, and YASS queries should be directed to Mrs Shearer.

## **Your friends**

Friends are important people in your lives, and you will often share similar interests. However, it is important to remember that your friends may have skills and talents that are different to yours.

Sometimes this means that you won’t choose to take the same subjects as your friends. Even if you pick the same subject as your friends, there is no guarantee that you would end up in the same class. Be careful that you don’t pick a subject just because your friend has taken it. You could end up studying a course that doesn’t make best use of your talents and skills.

## **Your teachers**

All your teachers are highly knowledgeable professionals and strive to offer you a first-class education. Naturally, you may have teachers that you get on with very well or who bring subject content to life and inspire you. In a similar way to the influence of your friends, this is an important part of school life. However, you do not know if your teacher will be able to take your class in S5. The relationship that you have with your teacher is very important, but it should not be the only factor that you consider when taking a subject on.

## **Your future**

Some pupils will have a clear idea about what they want to do when they leave school. Other pupils will not yet have thought about the future or have not decided on a pathway. If you have a clear idea about what you would like to do, then talk to your Pastoral Care teacher or our Careers Adviser about what you need to take on in S5/6. If you are undecided, then don't worry. Think about your skills and talents and make choices that will bring out the best in you.

## **Will I get to study my first-choice subjects?**

We always aim to ensure that all pupils get to study their preferred subjects in S5/6. However, sometimes courses do not run because of low uptake or due to timetabling constraints. Unfortunately, we do not have an infinite amount of teaching time available and cannot always guarantee that a course will run. Generally, a National 5 or Higher course needs at least ten pupils to run.

By way of reassurance, not being able to take subjects in S5 is rare, with a 95% return rate usually guaranteed across a year group. Where combinations do not clearly articulate with College or University requirements, you may find that you cannot take certain subjects.

### **Example**

You wish to apply for a university course and the entry requirements stipulate that you need to take Maths, English, Chemistry and Biology. Your attainment in S4 was as follows:

N5 Maths	A
N5 English	A
N5 Biology	A
N5 Chemistry	B
N5 Computing	B
N5 History	B
N5 Music	B

As an example, the school confirm that we can offer you Higher Maths, Higher English, Higher Chemistry and Higher Biology. You would like to take Higher Computing next year, but the school are unable to offer Higher Computing, or the course is oversubscribed with pupils intending to take Computing at college or university.

In this case we would recommend you study either History or Music, as we need to prioritise provision to best meet the needs of all learners. The subjects you require for university would still be open to you.

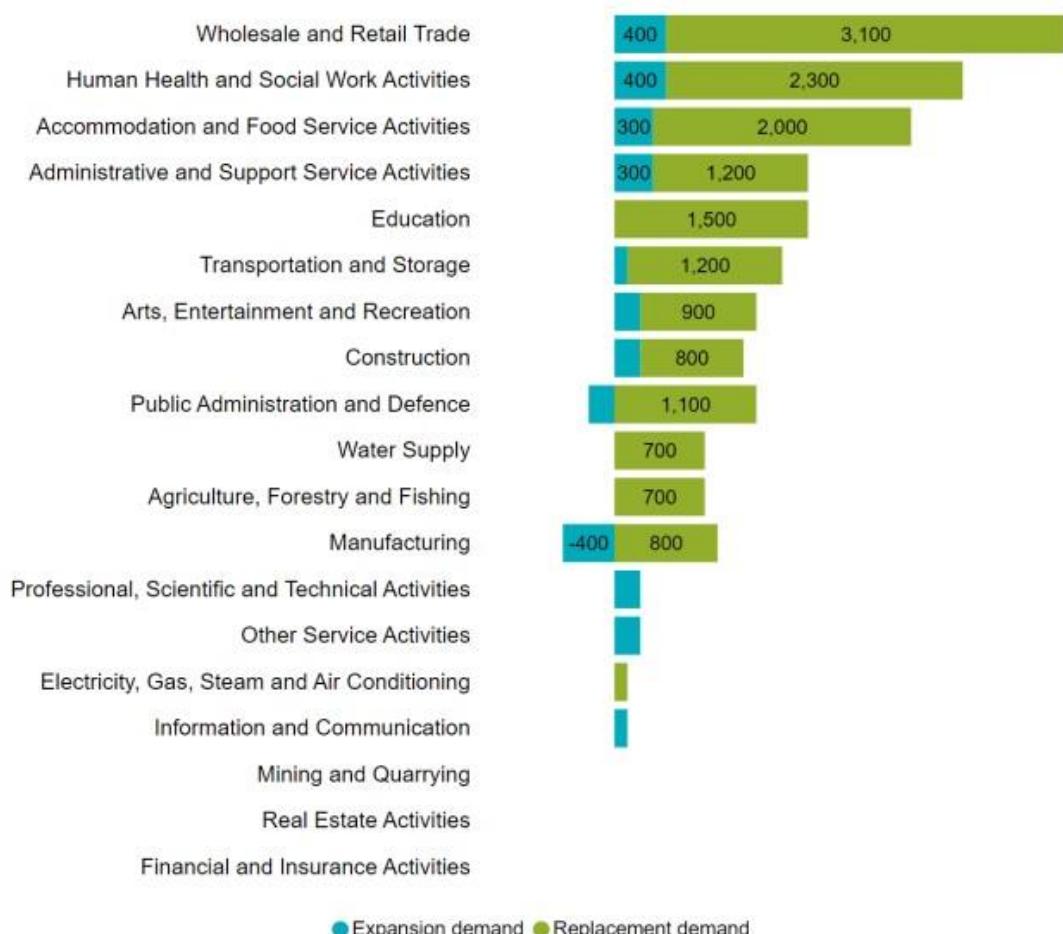
## Labour Market Intelligence and Regional Skills Assessments

Skills Development Scotland release data every year which identifies trends in the 'labour market'. This means that they look at employment opportunities in a geographical area and provide advice about where there may be opportunities for work.

This intelligence is a critical part of the decision-making process when you begin to think about your future. Take time to sit with your parents or carers to look at this information.

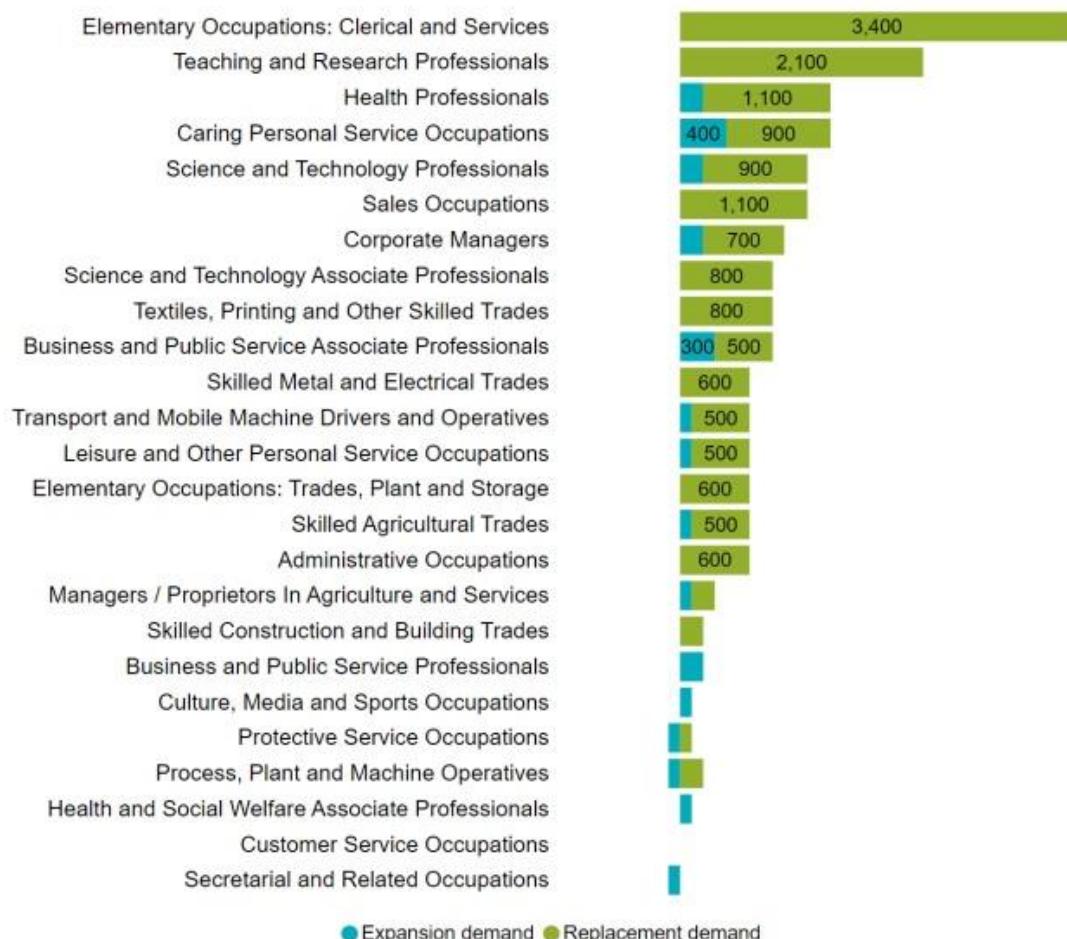
The graph shown below highlights the fact that in Ayrshire, the Scottish Government predict that employment opportunities will grow at the greatest rate in industries such as Wholesale and Retail Trade, Human Health and Social Work, Accommodation and Food Services, Education and Administration and Support Services.

**Forecast Total Requirement by Industry (2024-2027), Ayrshire**



By occupation, opportunities in the next few years are evident in areas such as Clerical and Services, Caring Services, Teaching/Research, Health and Science and Technology research professionals amongst others.

#### Forecast Total Requirement by Occupation (2024-2027), Ayrshire



The wider document from which the above was extracted at the time of writing is a long but interesting read for parents/carers and can be found here, [Regional Skills Report – December 2024 – Ayrshire](#).

## **S5 pupils moving into S6**

The previous page contains important labour market intelligence that you may wish to consider before making decisions about what you would like to take in S6.

As you come to the end of S5, you have important decisions to make. For some of you, it may now be time to consider leaving school, for others you may wish to stay on to increase the portfolio of qualifications that you will leave school with. Others will wish to take Advanced Highers in line with course entry requirements beyond school.

There is no doubt that S6 will also afford pupils the opportunity to develop leadership skills as part of the Senior Pupil Leadership Team. Some pupils in S5 may feel that another year at school will allow them to mature before moving on to college, university, or employment.

Deciding to stay on in S6 is not a decision that you should take lightly. As a school, we are delighted when a young person chooses to stay with us, but there are also expectations of pupils in S6 as senior ambassadors for St. Joseph's Academy.

Our expectations are as follows:

- Complete support for the uniform policy, including blazer
- Attendance in core PSE and core RE lessons is mandatory
- Commitment to ensure 100% attendance where possible
- Desire to demonstrate leadership by example via mentoring opportunities
- Commitment to support school events and activities

If you are unable to commit to the above, we would have concerns about your willingness to play your part in taking our school community forward, and of your maturity as senior pupil leaders. Our school needs committed, focussed S6 pupil leaders to set an example in relation to attendance, uniform, conduct and learning. If you are sure that you are prepared to commit to the wider life of the school, and the development of our ethos and culture then we recommend that you consider staying on. In relation to uniform, we will provide financial and material support where necessary and in complete confidence.

## **Pathways in S6**

While not exhaustive, the following scenarios detail advice in relation to what we believe may be best in several different scenarios and should be considered before deciding whether you wish to return for S6 next session.

### **I know that I need to stay on so that I can gain enough qualifications to apply for college, employment, or university next year (excluding Advanced Highers which are addressed later in this guide)**

If you are starting S6 with a need to increase your portfolio of attainment, we would highly recommend that you study four or five subjects in S6. Our experience shows that when requiring specific qualifications in S6 to secure entry to college or university, you are more likely to attain well if you study as many subjects as possible. The routine of classes and rigour of assessment are not lost on a timetable filled with four or five subjects. If you intend to return to study three subjects, we recommend a meeting with the careers adviser to ensure that you are still able to attain the qualifications you require from a narrower starting point.

If a young person is returning for S6 to add to their qualification portfolio, it is expected they a minimum of four school subjects at N5/Higher/ Advanced Higher level. If a returning S6 pupil is studying only SCQF subjects in S6 (without prelims/ final exams) or a small number of exam subjects, they are expected to choose five school subjects or four and one college course.

### **I have already accumulated the qualifications I need to secure a college place already**

In our experience, if you have decided upon a college pathway and you have already attained what you require to begin your course, you may benefit from moving onto college at the end of S5. College provision can prepare you well for the world of work and open pathways to HNC or HND qualifications that are not possible in school. You should make an appointment with Miss Faulds as soon as possible.

Should you decide to apply for a full time College place, please check <http://www1.ayrshire.ac.uk/find-a-course/all-courses/> to find the courses on offer next year.

## **I have already accumulated the qualifications I need to secure a university place.**

We understand that moving on to university happens at the end of S6 for many young people, even if they have already attained the grades necessary to secure a place at university by the end of S5. We know that it is not unusual to stay on to accumulate additional Highers, Advanced Highers, or leadership experience.

Sometimes there is a danger that with qualifications and unconditional offers already secured, pupils take the view that school is a part time setting. This is not the case. S6 pupils must study four subjects (including college if relevant). If studying at Advanced Higher level, this may be reduced to three pending discussions with your year head.

### **Other Advice**

#### **Advanced Highers**

##### **How do universities view Advanced Highers?** **(extract from [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk))**

In Scottish universities Advanced Highers are not usually required for entry, and, generally, it is more important to achieve the Highers required for entry level first before considering Advanced Highers.

For more competitive programmes, for example, medicine, dentistry or veterinary science, students are likely to need five Highers achieved in the fifth year, and then two advanced Highers and an additional Higher in the sixth year sitting.

In certain cases (particularly with science programmes) Advanced Highers may give you direct entry to a second year of a university programme.

It is also worth noting that if you don't get the set of Highers you want in fifth year then Advanced Highers (or a mixture of Highers and Advanced Highers) may make it more likely that a conditional place at university could be offered, rather than an unconditional place.

For instance, if you are wanting to compensate for a low Higher grade in a subject, a university may regard a C grade Advanced Higher as equal to a B grade Higher, and a B grade Advanced Higher as equal to an A grade Higher.

It is extremely important to always check specific entry requirements and talk directly to the universities if you have any doubts or questions about the Advanced Higher(s) or the combination of Highers and Advanced Highers you are considering in your sixth year.

Some Universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland accept Highers for entry to their degree programmes, but many other institutions will, in addition, ask for up to three Advanced Highers. It is crucial to check entry requirements as early as possible with each university you are considering.

### **Our Advanced Higher Provision – 2026/27**

In recent years, we have managed to significantly increase our Advanced Higher offering. Pupils have had the opportunity to sit Advanced Highers in Maths, English, French, Spanish, Chemistry, Biology, History, Art, Physics and Music. We are also offering Advanced Higher PE this year.

Advanced Highers are a valued part of our school curriculum however we need to review our Advanced Higher provision annually in light of the legal obligation we have to deliver the BGE (S1-S3 curriculum) and to provide S4-S5 pupils with the chance to sit National 5 and Higher qualifications. We had to follow the same process to ensure that we could deliver the S1-S5 curriculum during your time in S1-S5. In addition, any change to our staffing allocation year to year can impact on the viability of Advanced Higher provision.

As we need to wait until we have captured all options, and create a timetable schematic, final decisions on Advanced Higher provision will not be taken until much later in the session, usually May.

We also need to wait for all other schools to confirm their intentions before we will be in a position to notify next year's S6 students of the Advanced Higher courses on offer here and across East Ayrshire. We will pass this information on to pupils and parents/carers as soon as possible and hope to offer an interim update shortly after the Easter break.

As schools across East Ayrshire move to a new timetable at different times, it is not unusual for Advanced Higher courses to begin in August as opposed to May or June. It is also not unusual for class contact time to sit at three periods per week, with three self-directed periods of study (as an alternative to being unable to offer an Advanced Higher across six periods).

Advanced Higher Art will often run ‘off timetable’, meaning that pupils will be given access to an Art room throughout the week, with teaching support made available as and when necessary.

In a small number of cases, consortium arrangements afford pupils the opportunity to study Advanced Highers online. This initiative provides pupils in Dumfries and Galloway and East, North and South Ayrshire the opportunity to access some courses that their school cannot offer against staffing or uptake. It is important to consider that online learning at Advanced Higher level is different to class-based learning. The provision online may also result in a need to miss some timetabled classes in school. If we cannot offer courses face to face, we will advise pupils of the online opportunities available later in the session.

## **UCAS**

While you may have applied via UCAS in S5, you may reapply or apply for the first time in S6. UCAS is the management system used to process applications for college and university courses. You will receive support early in the new session from your Pastoral Care teacher and will have to write a personal statement. More information will be shared with you at the start of next session. In the interim, it may be a good idea to start to collate your personal statement, drawing on experience of leadership and participation both within and outwith school.

The school will also be asked to provide input in the form of a reference. We will include comment on your commitment to the wider life of the school and would stress the importance of the expectations detailed earlier.

We can guarantee a wide range of opportunities in relation to pupil leadership, work experience, intergenerational projects, parish partnerships, community action plan input and Duke of Edinburgh opportunities. You should aim to take up as many leadership opportunities as you can to enhance your UCAS application. We caution against signing up for leadership roles but not fulfilling

the obligations of the role. While we will do all we can to support you, we will not make false statements about your commitment to the school, leadership, attendance, uniform and ethos. We will draw on your dedication and commitment to the school to ensure that we provide an accurate, honest and full reference.

### **Young Applicants in Scotland Scheme (YASS) – S6 Pupils**

The Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) gives S6 students in Scotland the unique opportunity to study a range of university level modules alongside their school based studies. These modules are completed online via the Open University.

- YASS will release a prospectus of courses in the next few months, and pupils and parents/carers can find out more about YASS here – [YASS Blog](#).
- They offer a [wide range of subject choices](#), in areas including Science, Engineering, Business Studies, IT and Computing, Arts, Mathematics, Health and Social Care, Sport and Exercise, and Languages.
- Each course offered through YASS is Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 7, equivalent to first year university level.
- Courses can last from five to nine months and are clearly structured with timetables and deadlines.
- Studying with The Open University gives you the flexibility to decide when and where you study each week.
- Shorter courses normally require up to eight hours of study a week, while a longer one can require up to 14 hours a week.

YASS courses can be taken in S6 as a fifth choice where you have already elected to study four subjects, or as a fourth choice if undertaking three Advanced Highers.

At this stage, you should simply register interest in finding out more about YASS courses when interviewed by your Pastoral Care teacher. Once the Open University clarify the courses on offer in session 2026/27, we will contact those to have indicated that YASS is of interest and Mrs Shearer will provide more information on the application process.

## **Caritas**

As a Catholic school, the Caritas award is a central offering in S6. The Caritas award can be accessed by all S6 pupils. Rather than studying core RE, you will spend time working towards your Caritas award during timetabled RE times. There will be certain points in the year where your class will focus on elements of Core RE, but in the main, your time in class will be spent on gathering and accumulating evidence that can be considered by SCES (Scottish Catholic Education Service) in advance of achieving the Caritas award.

You can find out more about the Caritas award [here](https://sces.org.uk/caritas-award/).

For further information, please speak to Mr Brown or Mrs Devine. During your options interview, you will be asked to take either Core RE, or Caritas.

<https://sces.org.uk/caritas-award/>

## **What happens next?**

If you are currently in S4 and skipped the section for S5 into S6 pupils, please read the page 26 on Foundation Apprenticeships. The rest of this booklet provides you with information on each subject on offer in S5/6. Please take time to read all pages carefully. Teachers have provided as much information as possible. Once you have read this booklet take some time to talk to your family.

## **Who will help me?**

- Subject teachers will clarify the different learning pathways open to you in each department
- The PSE Programme will include a visit from the Careers Adviser, Miss Faulds who will talk to you about planning for the future
- S3 My World of Work Ambassadors will be on hand to offer support next week to pupils currently in S4 and S5 who require access to the MyWoW website
- A member of the Pastoral Care team will carry out personalisation and choice interviews and talk to you about the decisions that you intend to make after you submit your online options form.

## **Can I change my mind in light of prelim results and/or later in the process?**

Yes, you have a fortnight from the point that you have your interview to request a change. Please note, while change requests will feed into the overall process if received on time, we will not know if anyone's choices are fully viable until much later in the process. Subsequent requests received after the February weekend will be honoured where viable, but notification of the viability of late change requests will likely not be possible until late March.

## **NB – More information on College Courses**

You can find out more about what is involved in each SCQF4, 5 and 6 College course as well as HNC, HND and Foundation Apprenticeships via the Ayrshire College website.

<https://www1.ayrshire.ac.uk/find-a-course/all-courses/>

There are a number of College course guides shown at the end of this file, but some on offer next session were not available to us at the time of writing, and others may have been removed from the College catalogue. For the most accurate information on College courses, you must access the College website via the link shown above.

**S4/5 into S5/6 Personalisation and Choice Form – To be completed online via Microsoft Forms at Interview**

Pupil Name:

Career Aspiration:



National 5 Courses	Higher Courses	Other SCQF Courses	Advanced Higher Courses (TBC in May 2026)
Application of Maths	Administration and IT	NPA Criminology (SCQF5)	Art and Design
Art and Design	Application of Maths	Personal Finance (SCQF5)	Biology
Biology	Art and Design	Creative Thinking (SCQF5&6)	Chemistry
Business Management	Biology	P.E: Leadership through Sport (SCQF5&6) <i>(Sport and Recreation, Leadership Award, Wellbeing)</i>	English
Chemistry	Business Management	Health Sector (SCQF5)	French
Computing Science	Chemistry	NPA Musical Theatre	History
Drama	Computing Science	NPA Dance	Maths
English	Drama		Music
French	English or ESOL		Physics
Geography	French		Spanish
German	Geography		
History	German	College Course or Foundation Apprenticeship (Enter course name):	
Modern Studies	History		
Music	Maths		
PE: Games Performance Pathway	Modern Studies	Caritas Yes or No (circle choice)	
		YASS Yes or No (circle yes if interested in finding out more)	
Physics	Music		
Spanish	PE: Movement Performance Pathway		
	PE: Games Performance Pathway	Advice Note  S4 into S5 – 5 subjects or 5 subjects plus College S5 into S6 – 4/5 subjects or 4/5 subjects plus College, or 3 Advanced Highers	
	Physics		
	Politics (S6 Only)		
	Psychology (S6 Only)		
	RMPS		
	Spanish		

Pupil signature:

Parent/Carer signature:

Pastoral Care signature: