Transitioning to A-level Biology

Making use of this document

Welcome, and congratulations on choosing A-Level Biology. It is one of the most highly regarded subjects by universities for its myriad transferable skills and demonstration of one's ability to think critically and analytically. More importantly, it is a fascinating subject and we hope you enjoy studying it!

The majority of this document is guidance and transition activities recommended by the exam board. But the first two pages provide some information specific to Lawnswood that we think would be of benefit.

We recommend you read the full thing first. Then have a go at the 11 activities (which certainly doesn't have to be all in one go) just to refresh the GCSE biology and maths skills that you will be needing to use again.

After that, it is a good idea to start looking at the recommended additional activities outlined below. The more familiar you are with these now, the easier it will be to make use of them whilst studying.

The contact details of the A-level Biology team are below. We welcome any questions, requests for help with the activities (or the answers when you are ready) or feedback.

The A-level Biology Team

If you are studying at Lawnswood you will be taught by two teachers, though we sometimes switch up the teaching pairing between Y12 and Y13.

Feel free to contact any of us with any of your questions.

The team is –

Fiona Gilbank - fiona.gilbank@elawnswood.co.uk
Jason Stephenson – jason.stephenson@elawnswood.co.uk
Rebecca Siddons - rebecca.siddons@elawnswood.co.uk
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Our recommendations beyond the AQA transition guide

There is an awful lot of choice out there now, this specification is a popular one and has been running for several years so numerous books and websites target their support towards AQA A-level Biology.

Textbook

The book that we recommend as your main textbook is:

Oxford – AQA Biology : A-Level Year 1 and AS (2nd edition)

ISBN: 978-0-19-835176-4

If you order this through the school in September, we can normally get a discount by bulk ordering (it is currently selling for £29.99)

Please note that this book covers only the AS content that is covered in Year 12, and a separate one is available for the A-Level content covered in Year 13.

There is the alternative to buy the year 1 and year 2 content combined into one book.

Oxford – AQA Biology : A Level (2nd edition)

ISBN: 978-0-19-835177-1

This one is currently priced at £43.99, but again we are likely to be able to get a significant discount if we order through school. Also, it is quite heavy which may put you off bringing it to lessons with you!

Publications

1. The Biologist and Science Focus – Great publications with articles covering a large range of topics. To access, visit our log in page: https://exacteditions.com/login and select the "library card" option in the top right-hand corner. Then enter your six-digit code into the "card number" bar and log in. The six-digit code for Lawnswood School is **608089**.

2. The Big Picture is a publication from the Wellcome Trust. You can go to https://www.stem.org.uk/big-picture/resource-collection and look through the resources that will help you recap your GCSE knowledge and introduce some of the A Level content. I would recommend looking at the topics on cells, proteins, lipids and statistics as these will help you in the first units we will be studying.

3. New Scientist and Science Focus – Publications about current scientific topics and research. You can access these for free if you have a Leeds Library Card (details of how to access here https://www.leeds.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/online-library).

Reading around the subject

You don't take challenging courses like A level sciences unless you have developed some interest (either in school or due to never ending process of scientific discovery, advancement and revision that is occurring in many fields every single day. We are writing this in the middle of a global pandemic which is relying on many of the advancements that studying science has made possible from epidemiology, drug development, virology and so many more!

There are many books that you could read to help you prepare for A Level Biology but the following are a couple of suggestions to get you started.

1. Power. Sex, Suicide: Mitochondria and the meaning of life – Nick Lane - ISBN-10: 0199205647
2. Junk DNA: A Journey Through the Dark Matter of the Genome – Nessa Carey - ISBN-13: 9780231170857

Videos

1. **David Attenborough** – where do I start? So many amazing series but in particular Planet Earth and The Blue Planet. Most of the series are available on iPlayer, Netflix etc.
2. **You Tube** – some good channels to explore; iBiology (leading scientists uploading new discoveries and also helping to review topics), Crash Course Biology (he talks very quickly!) and Khan Academy.

Seneca

If you filter the Seneca learning website type of course to 'summer accelerator'. They have produced a course which is specifically designed to refresh the important parts of GCSE and give you a taste of how it will link the A level.

Finally, the specification is linked in the AQA document attached. But for ease of access you can find it, and a number of other resources, on the AQA A level Biology page - https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/science/as-and-a-level/biology-7401-7402