

# A-level Biology Course Information

## Course Overview

- **Exam Board** – AQA
- **Usual Age Range** – 16 to 19
- **Qualification** – One A-level
- **Curriculum Time** – Five 50-minute lessons per week in class plus work in Independent Learning Time
- **Assessment** – Three 2-hour examinations taken at the end of the two-year course
- **Grading** – Reformed six-point A-level scale of A\*, A, B, C, D, E.
- **Full specification** -  
<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/biology/specifications/AQA-7401-7402-SP-2015.PDF>

## Curriculum Intent

The **intent** of A-level Biology is to give UTC students an opportunity to build on their GCSE studies to develop a broad understanding of the content within the following eight fundamental areas that are further split into topics and to be able to apply this understanding to explain biological phenomena:

- Biological molecules
- Cells
- Organisms exchange substances with their environment
- Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms
- Energy transfer in and between organisms
- Organisms respond to changes in their environment
- Genetics, populations, evolution, and ecosystems
- The control of gene expression

In addition to learning the content in each topic at A-level the intention is to learn how to draw together different areas of knowledge and understanding within answers to questions. This breadth is assessed in the third examination paper.

At the UTC we specifically intend students to appreciate biology's relevance to the world of work, in particular healthcare science. Healthcare science **careers** are explicitly taught within relevant topics in the A-level Biology sequence of learning. Students will also have direct first-hand experience of our healthcare science partners through project days and other aspects of UTC life such as our extensive UTC extra programme. A variety of careers outside this specialism are also taught in appropriate topics. The intent is to motivate students to pursue further study in a biology related subject beyond A-level. Suggested **destinations** after completion of this course include progression onto courses such as medicine or biomedical science. Some students aiming for such a course might choose to study Medical Science as a fourth subject alongside their three A-levels.

Throughout A-level Biology students are encouraged to develop their **literacy skills**. Students are regularly exposed to reading material in class and extended writing activities such as experimental write ups. Extended response questions allow students to demonstrate their ability to construct and develop a sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant, substantiated and logically structured. The biological literacy level of this course is not underestimated as the first examination paper requires extended response, the second comprehension and the third an essay from a choice of two titles. Through the explicit teaching of specific biology key words as each topic is taught students demonstrate their understanding of a growing biology vocabulary building on what was taught at GCSE by carefully designed written tasks, as well as verbally through questioning techniques used by their teacher. This **love**

**of reading** is further developed by both non-fiction and fiction biology related titles that have been carefully selected by their biology teachers that are available to borrow in our Learning Resource Centre. It is often found that by A-level the students are reading the same biology titles as their teachers and this passion is shared further through our UTC extra programme or through students choosing scientific titles in their Extended Project Qualification.

Like GCSE Biology, although to at least Higher GCSE Mathematics standard, the following five fundamental **numeracy** threads running through all A-level sciences are taught via the context of A-level Biology. These are reinforced further albeit through a complementary subject in A-level Chemistry and A-level Physics:

- Arithmetic and numerical computation
- Handling data
- Algebra
- Graphs
- Geometry and trigonometry

For example, students are taught how to calculate the rate of change from a graph showing a linear relationship. In A-level Biology they are taught to use a gradient to calculate the rate of transpiration. In A-level Chemistry a gradient could be used to calculate the rate constant of a zero-order reaction. Whilst in A-level Physics a gradient could be used to calculate the acceleration which is the rate of change of velocity. Our students are well prepared in biological numeracy as 10% of the marks in A-level Biology examinations now requires such a skill.

The students at our UTC experience more than the twelve required practical activities that the examination board requires. At this UTC students achieve the practical endorsement so are well prepared for a destination that requires this as part of the admissions process. Students are engaged in biology because they have the opportunity to complete practical work.

## Remote Learning and Revision

Students will benefit from additional study on-site and at home using their personal copy of their Oxford University Press Textbook provided by the UTC.

Students can communicate with the teacher via the message function on Teams if absent from school and well enough to do some work.

AQA Practice Papers -

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/science/as-and-a-level/biology-7401-7402/assessment-resources?f.Sub-category%7CF=Sample+papers+and+mark+schemes>

## Curriculum Overview

The learning in A-level Biology is sequenced as follows.

*Note: the full Curriculum Plans are available on request to [info@nef.tynecoast.academy](mailto:info@nef.tynecoast.academy)*

**Revision Resources** – Click on the following for links to your Kerboodle study guide

Year 12

Half term 1

[1- Biological Molecules](#)

[2- Nucleic acids](#)

[3- Cell Structure](#)

Half term 2

[4- Transport across cell membranes](#)

[8- DNA, genes, and protein synthesis](#)

[9- Genetic diversity and adaptation](#)

Half term 3

[5- Cell recognition and the Immune System](#)

[10- Biodiversity](#)

Half term 4

[6- Exchange](#)

[7- Mass transport](#)

Half term 5

[17- Inherited change](#)

[18- Populations and evolution](#)

[19- Populations in Ecosystems](#)

Half term 6

*Revision*

Year 13

Half term 1

[11- Photosynthesis](#)

[12- Respiration](#)

Half term 2

[13- Energy and ecosystems](#)

[14- Responses to stimuli](#)

[15- Nervous coordination and muscles](#)

Half term 3

[16- Homeostasis](#)

Half term 4

[20- Gene expression](#)

[21- Recombinant DNA technology](#)