Course Start

Course Start is independent learning you need to complete as a fundamental part of your introduction to the course. It should take you approximately 5 hours to complete.

Course Name	**A Level Business**
How this **Course Start** fits into the first term of the course	Our first units of study are: **Unit 1: What is business? Managing marketing and finance**
How will my **Course Start** learning be used in lessons?	The tasks will introduce you to some of the key skills you will need to be successful in this subject. It will feed directly into your first few lessons, where your research will be immediately relevant.
Course Start learning objectives	Begin to consider different types of business and their role in wider society Practice researching relevant and precise information
Study Skills	**Research skills -** using online sources and identifying key information **Communication skills -** using your findings, utilise and formulate effective writing skills **Data handling -** confidence doing simple calculations to support business analysis **Data processing** – finding and interpreting business data

Expectations for: A Level Business

Our specification is: AQA Business (7138)

What this course involves:
Completing Planned Study (independent learning) of 4 to 5 hours per week.
Writing tasks involving a range of practice exam questions (e.g., short answers of one paragraph up to essays of 2-3 sides).
Application of numerical skills including analysing graphs and data, calculating and using financial performance measures.
Demonstrating a keen interest in current affairs and its impact on business. Keeping up to date with current political and economic changes.
Engaging in class discussions to develop analytical and evaluative skills in order to put forward a balanced case in essay questions.
Developing independent learning skills (e.g., time management, preparing for each week's lessons, completing learning tasks outside lessons).
Develop an awareness of a wide range of UK based and global businesses; their operations, objectives and social impact.
Developing a deeper understanding of employment opportunities and the aspects of business management that will impact personal growth and fulfilment in work.

Welcome to A Level Business

Welcome to Varndean and to the Business Department! We hope you are looking forward to getting started with us in September and we will endeavour to help you achieve your ambitions through Business A Level.

On the next page you'll find some of the questions that new students often ask when they first visit us – we hope you'll find the answers helpful, but do get in touch if you have any other queries.

Studying Business will give you the analytical skills to properly examine why some businesses succeed and why some fail. What does it mean to be a successful business? Is it simply about making the owners a healthy profit or is there more to owning a business? How can managers make their employees work harder? Should a business improve its product or reduce its prices? What drives share prices up one day and down the next?

In order to help you with your transition to college and to get you ready for the challenges of studying A Level Business, we've put together some learning activities for you to do over the summer, to get you thinking about businesses in an analytical way.

The activities are divided into "must do" and "could do", together with the suggested time you should spend on each activity. We encourage you to do as many of these activities as you can. Please bring your work with you to your first Business lesson or submit it in advance via email.

Do drop me an email if you have any questions. Have a great summer!

Nick Maloney, nnm@varndean.ac.uk
Programme Leader for A Level Business

FAQs

1) **Do I need to buy a textbook?**

   No! The library has the key recommended textbooks available online so you can access them at home on a computer at any time. However, if you want a paper copy, browse the textbooks in the library and pick one that you like. But choose carefully, as new textbooks are expensive! The librarians can advise you – there is a librarian that specifically looks after the business resources. We will introduce her early on in the course so you know who to ask.

2) **What equipment will I need for Business lessons?**

   The important thing is to be organised!
   A very basic calculator and a pen is a must. Many students find it useful to take notes in an A5 or A4 notepad. Keeping your notes organised is a challenge and we will guide you. Having an A4 ring binder with subject dividers at home is important to keep any written notes, class handouts and marked tests in. A portable folder to keep class notes safe is also very useful – save your notes getting scrunched in the bottom of your bag!

3) **How much homework will I get each week?**

   You will be expected to complete between four and five hours of planned study each week outside of lessons. A proportion of this will be questions to complete. The rest of the time should be used to complete the guided reading and notetaking tasks, update your terminology glossary, and extension reading.

4) **How will I be assessed during the course?**

   The final grade is assessed through three exams. In order to prepare you for that challenge, you will be tested regularly in class. These will be past exam questions and marked using A Level criterion. The test weeks are published as part of your scheme of work and we will advise you as to the content you should revise in advance.

5) **What trips are planned?**

   We will visit a number of businesses during the year to help you bring the classroom theory to life. It is recommended that you take advantage of the trips as they really help you to understand the course content. Last year we visited Gatwick, the AMEX, Sussex and Brighton Universities, a London branding agency and a local commercial artist.

If you have any questions before lessons start, drop me an email.

A Level Business Course Start Activities

Activity 1 (approx. 2 hours):

You need to complete some research on two businesses.

The first should be one that people across the country would recognise.

The second needs to be one local to you, ideally a relatively small business known mostly to local people. This may involve you contacting the business in order to find out the information needed. Some of the information, a small business may be reluctant to divulge. If this is the case, using some online research, estimate the figures typically a business of that type might have.

Fill in the table below (or create your own document or paper version using the same titles):

Business 1 (large, well-known business) Name:	**Business 2 (small, local business)** Name:
Description of what it sells/does:	Description of what it sells/does:
Who owns the business? o Founder o Private investors o Shareholders Notes:	Who owns the business? o Founder o Private investors o Shareholders Notes:
What is its annual revenue?	What is its annual revenue?
What is its annual profit?	What is its annual profit?
How many employees?	How many employees?

Does the business have a positive or negative impact on: o its customers? How? o its employees? How? o the community? How? o the environment? How?	Does the business have a positive or negative impact on: o its customers? How? o its employees? How? o the community? How? o the environment? How?
What competition for its customers does the business face? Who are its main competitors?	What competition for its customers does the business face? Who are its main competitors?

Activity 2 (approx. 1 hour):

Complete the calculations. Use a calculator and show your working.

You may want to print this out or complete it on paper.

	Question	Working and Answer
1	A local bakery sells artisanal cakes for £25 each. The cost of the ingredients makes up 40% of the selling price. Calculate the cost of the ingredients for one cake.	
2	A clothing store buys a jacket from a wholesaler for £20 and sells it to customers for £80. The profit made on the jacket is £60. What is this profit expressed as a percentage of the selling price?	
3	In 2024, a tech startup had 80 regular business clients. By 2025, the number of clients had grown to 100. Calculate the percentage increase in their client base.	
4	An eco-friendly café managed to reduce its monthly food waste from 50 kg down to 39 kg. Calculate the percentage decrease in food waste.	
5	The total value of the UK fitness app market is £20 million. A new app called "FitPulse" achieves annual sales of £2 million. Calculate FitPulse’s market share as a percentage.	

	Question	Working and Answer
6	The total UK organic vegetable market was valued at £200 million in 2024. In 2025, the market size increased to £212 million. Calculate the market growth rate.	
7	The total weekly sales in a small town's coffee market are £40,000. "The Daily Grind" café holds a 15% market share. Calculate the value of weekly sales for The Daily Grind.	
8	A boutique hotel has a maximum capacity of 50 rooms. On a quiet Tuesday night, 32 of those rooms are occupied by paying guests. Calculate the hotel's capacity utilisation for that night.	
9	A car factory has a maximum operational capacity of 8,000 vehicles per month. Last month, the factory operated at an 85% capacity utilisation rate due to part shortages. How many cars did the factory actually produce?	
10	A company manufactures custom smartphone cases. They sell each case for £15. The variable cost (materials and packaging) to make each case is £6. Calculate the contribution per unit.	Contribution per unit = selling price - variable cost per unit

	Question	Working and Answer
11	Using the smartphone case company from Question 10, the business has fixed costs (rent, salaries, insurance) of £18,000 per month. Use the formula to calculate how many cases they need to sell each month to break even:	$$\text{Break-Even Point} = \frac{\text{Fixed Costs}}{\text{Contribution per Unit}}$$
12	A local cinema knows that its fixed costs are £12,000 per week. To break even exactly, the cinema must sell 1,500 tickets. Rearrange the break-even formula to calculate the contribution per ticket needed to achieve this.	

Activity 3 (approx. 1 hour):

Investigate a non-for-profit organisation of your choice – an organisation that operates for purposes other than profit, such as charitable, educational or social causes. It could be a charity you know, local to you, or an organisation that has played a role in your life, or you are interested in.

Produce a brief presentation (e.g. PowerPoint, Google Slides or Prezi) that answers the following questions:

- What's the organisation's mission or goals?
- How does it generate revenue or finance itself?
- What are its main costs?
- What does it do?
- What other organisations do similar things?

Who does it compete with? What does it compete for?

During your first lesson, you will be asked to upload the presentation, so make sure you have it accessible - saved in the cloud or emailed to yourself as a file or link.

You may be asked to present or discuss your presentation. Aim for it to only take a maximum of 5 minutes to present.