

# **Schools and colleges guide** for UK institutions

**FLEXIBLE OPTIONS TO BROADEN YOUR SCHOOL'S  
CURRICULUM OFFER, TACKLE TIMETABLE CLASHES  
AND SUPPORT STUDENTS NEEDS**

**GCSE**

**A level**

**Functional Skills**

**Career development**

**[www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk)**

**0800 389 2839**

## About NEC

At the National Extension College (NEC) we've been providing distance learning to help young people and adults open doors to their futures for over 55 years. During that time, we've seen on many occasions how someone's life can be transformed by taking the right course at the right time.

Each year thousands of students access our high quality courses and expert tutor support to develop their knowledge and skills, and achieve their goals.

We understand that as a teacher, you will want the best for your students. So, if you are looking to fill gaps in subject areas, help a student unable to attend school or looking for professional development courses for your staff, we can help.



## Case study

**Kathryn Tompsett's school sixth form didn't offer psychology at A level.**

**Rather than move school or find a college that did, she opted for an A level course with NEC, which she learnt about from the Open University website.**

Once she had enrolled on the course, Kathryn had lots of questions. How would she fit in her distance learning with her other classroom-based courses?

How much time would she need to spend studying independently? Would she be able to teach herself a subject from scratch? What would it be like to be the only student in her school studying psychology?

*'I needn't have worried,' says Kathryn. 'My school was very supportive of what I was doing. I found the NEC course easy to follow and could see right away that I didn't need any prior experience or knowledge of the subject to be able to follow the syllabus.'*

Once she got into the swing of it, Kathryn found distance learning suited her: *'I was able to work easily by myself. Most of all, I enjoyed receiving feedback from my tutor, because her suggestions were always very encouraging, supportive and constructive.'*

# Flexible solutions to support you and your students

With over 20 years' experience working with schools and colleges, the National Extension College (NEC) has a wealth of expertise in supporting you and your students with flexible learning.

We've put together this Guide to flexible study options at GCSE and A level, to show you how distance learning can fill gaps in your curriculum to give your students more subject choices. It can also help you to overcome timetable clashes, and support students absent from school, for example due to illness.

## At NEC we can help you to:

- Maintain and expand subject choice - choose from a wide range of subjects including: psychology, philosophy, astronomy and politics.
- Overcome timetable clashes and staff shortages.
- Support students unable to attend school or college, such as those with a long-term illness.
- Fill gaps in students' GCSE qualifications - including English and maths.
- Stretch your gifted and talented students.
- Develop transferable independent study skills that prepare students for higher education and employment.

We have helped many schools and colleges to meet these challenges. Why not get in contact with us to see how we can help you?

## No set enrolment times or minimum number of students

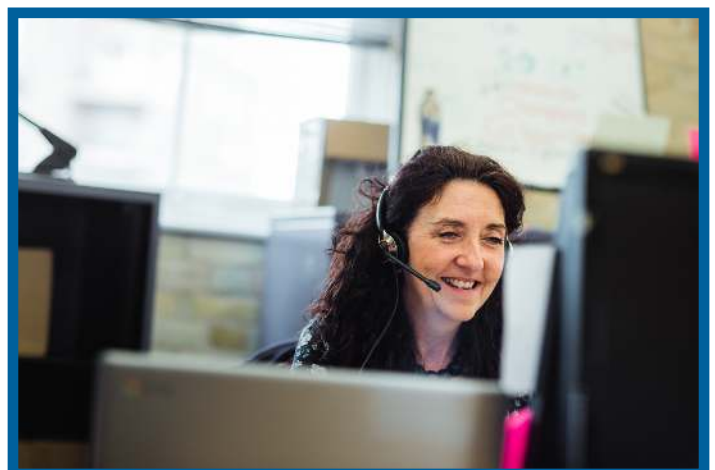
There are no set enrolment times or minimum numbers of students. Whether you need to enrol one student or meet the needs of a group of students, our flexible provision means we can step in at short notice, and at any time, to help. With our affordable course fees you are guaranteed a high-quality solution to your student's study needs.

## Your students will benefit from our:

- High-quality, structured course materials that guide them through the subject and are specially written for independent study by our expert teams of writers.
- A personal tutor who is a specialist in their subject, to support them through their course, mark assignments and provide feedback.
- Access to online course materials - including forums where they can interact with other students on the same course.

## We will support you with:

- Your own login to [learn@nec](mailto:learn@nec) to access the course so you can view the course materials and have access to the students' gradebook to help monitor their progress and provide appropriate support.
- Advice on exams and coursework administration.
- Reassurance that our tutors are DBS checked and qualified, to ensure your students will receive the teaching support they'll need. Most of our tutors have worked as teachers and have expertise in teaching online and supporting their students.



# What makes an NEC course the best

Teachers tell us that they value our high-quality course materials, expert tutor support and non-examination assessment elements like coursework authentication and marking. We believe that the NEC model of carefully designed course materials, support from a personal tutor and NEA services, provides your students with the best chance of success. We are proud of what we do and build on over 55 years' of experience of supporting students at a distance.



With NEC the course follows the student, they can carry on studying wherever they are. Flexibility like that is hard to find.

**School using NEC courses with A level and GCSE students**

## 1. Materials

### Course materials

- Engaging content develops interest in the subject
- Getting started guidance and videos
- Course plans, activities and quizzes
- Guidance on answering exam questions
- Assignments to submit to a personal tutor
- Personal learning journal



The materials are set out in a way that makes them easy to understand.

**David, IGCSE Physics and IGCSE Biology**

## 3. Experts

### Personal tutor

- Subject specialists
- Qualified and experienced teachers
- DBS checked

### Expert writers

Materials specially written and structured for independent study; to meet assessment and exam requirements; to build knowledge and skills

## 2. Support

### Tutor support

- Expert and constructive marking of assignments
- Carefully structured feedback
- Answers to subject-based questions
- Predicted grades if needed

### Student support

- Course advice before you enrol
- Help with enrolling and arranging payment
- Personal support when needed
- Answers to specific queries about the course, exam or assessment
- Forums to discuss ideas with other students and tutors

### Exam support

- Mock exam paper marking service (additional service)
- Authentication and marking of coursework if required

## 4. Extras

### Free extras

- Study skills to support independent learning
- ebooks for some courses
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar guides

Our course fees include the course materials, tutorial support for the whole course, as well as Progress Portal access for one teacher at your school. We support a GCSE subject for 18 months and an A level subject for 24 months.

**From as little as £450 your student can complete a fully supported course of study. Our business development team will provide a full list of fees tailored to your needs.**



# A levels and GCSEs

At NEC we work hard to make sure that all of our GCSEs and A levels are developed for the latest specifications and designed to give students the best possible chance of success.

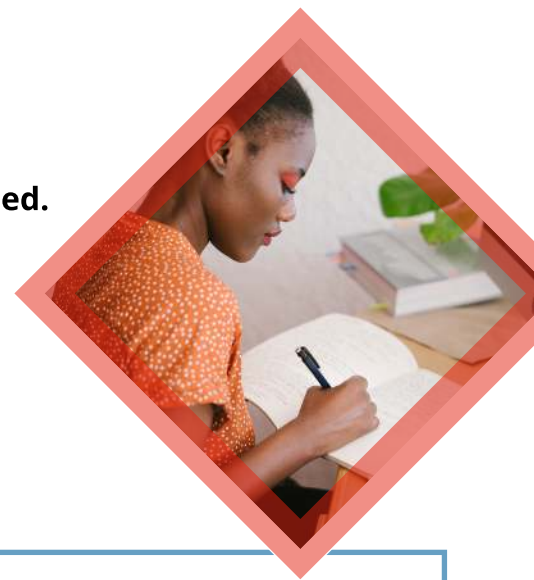
Our A levels and GCSEs are delivered online through our learning platform **learn@nec**. The course materials are in a range of media including: videos, ebooks and online quizzes. These have been produced and carefully selected by our expert course developers who include teachers, examiners and distance learning experts. Materials can also be printed out.


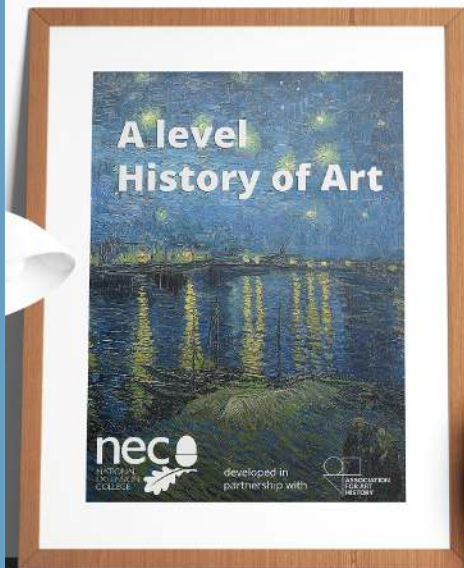
We'll make sure that your students have everything they need to succeed, including a clear introduction and well-structured assignments to help them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to prepare for their exam(s).

NEC's Student Support team and their subject tutor will help them on every step of their journey with NEC.

## What's so good about NEC's A levels and GCSEs?

- **Free ebook for most essential textbooks.**
- **Coursework administration and authentication included.**
- **Enrol at any time.**
- **Sample course materials available on our website.**
- **Assignments marked by subject tutors. We aim to respond within 10 working days.**





## Course spotlight

### A level History of Art

Developed in partnership with the Association for Art History and Art History in Schools, our **A level History of Art** course is the perfect option for schools who do not currently have the capacity or capability to offer History of Art.

If you have Art and Design teachers who need the confidence to teach History of Art, this course is designed to be studied by students of any age or prior knowledge.

Maybe your students are looking to study history of art or architecture at university? This course will provide the perfect basis for higher education.

# learn@nec: Your student's online classroom

**learn@nec** is our virtual learning platform and the gateway to our courses and the NEC community. Our courses are delivered online and all the materials your students need to study are here, available for them to access wherever and whenever they choose. **learn@nec** includes:

- **Getting started** - how to use **learn@nec**, including: videos, course plans and assessment guidance. Designed to get students off to the best possible start.
- **Course materials** - developed, written and sourced by subject experts and specifically designed for independent study. Materials include activities and assignments to prepare students for formal assessment. Our materials assume that English is the student's first language. If you need to know more, you can download a free course sample from our website **www.nec.ac.uk** to check that they will be able to engage fully with the course.
- **Learning journal** - their own private space for students to reflect on what they have learnt.
- **Essential skills** - access to resources to help students develop essential study skills, plus help with spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- **Forums** - an area for students to discuss ideas and interact with other students studying the same subject(s).



I would recommend the NEC sociology course as a high-standard learning facility, set at a fair price.

**Patrick Robinson in 'The Sociology Teacher'**

## Course spotlight

### Functional Skills

**Our innovative Functional Skills courses in English language and maths will help to fill gaps in your curriculum and support students who need to develop these vital skills.**

Click on the links below to visit the course pages to learn more about how the courses are structured and how NEC can support your students through their Functional Skills journey:

- ▶ Functional Skills Maths Levels 1 & 2
- ▶ Functional Skills Maths Level 2
- ▶ Functional Skills English Levels 1 & 2
- ▶ Functional Skills English Level 2

# A levels and GCSE courses at a glance

NEC offers a wide range of GCSE, IGCSE and A level subjects all available for distance learning. Our courses are written by subject specialists and cover the same topics as those taught in schools and colleges. The table below shows which subjects NEC offers and which awarding body and specification the course covers.

Subject	Course	Awarding body	AS	A level	GCSE	IGCSE
<b>History, Geography &amp; Classics</b>	Classical Civilisation A level	OCR H408		✓		
	Geography IGCSE	CAIE 0460				✓
	History A level	Edexcel 8HI0/9HI0 (Route D)	✓	✓		
	History of Art A level	Edexcel 9HT0		✓		
	History IGCSE	Edexcel 4HI1				✓
<b>Languages</b>	French A level	AQA 7651/7652	✓	✓		
	French IGCSE	Edexcel 4FR1				✓
	Spanish A level	AQA 7691/7692	✓	✓		
	Spanish IGCSE	Edexcel 4SP1				✓
<b>English</b>	English Language A level	AQA 7701/7702	✓	✓		
	English Language GCSE	AQA 8700			✓	
	English Literature A level	AQA 7712 (Spec A)		✓		
	English Literature GCSE	Edexcel 1ET0			✓	
<b>Sciences</b>	Astronomy GCSE	Edexcel 1AS0			✓	
	Biology A level	Edexcel 8BN0/9BN0 (Salters Nuffield)	✓	✓		
	Biology IGCSE	Edexcel 4BI1				✓
	Chemistry A level	Edexcel 8CH0/9CH0	✓	✓		
	Chemistry IGCSE	Edexcel 4CH1				✓
	Combined Science IGCSE	CAIE 0653				✓
	Double Science Award IGCSE	Edexcel 4SD0				✓
	Physics A level	Edexcel 8PH0/9PH0	✓	✓		
	Physics IGCSE	Edexcel 4PH1				✓
<b>Maths</b>	Further Maths A level	Edexcel 8FM0/9FM0	✓	✓		
	Maths A level	Edexcel 8MA0/9MA0	✓	✓		
	Maths GCSE	Edexcel 1MA1			✓	
<b>Social Sciences &amp; Humanities</b>	Politics A level	Edexcel 8PL0/9PL0	✓	✓		
	Philosophy A level	AQA 7171/7172	✓	✓		
	Psychology A level	AQA 7181/7182	✓	✓		
	Psychology GCSE	AQA 8182			✓	
	Religious Studies A level	Edexcel 8RS0/9RS0	✓	✓		
	Sociology A level	AQA 7191/7192	✓	✓		
	Sociology GCSE	AQA 8192	✓	✓		
<b>Business &amp; Law</b>	Business A level	AQA 7131/7132	✓	✓		
	Business IGCSE	Edexcel 4BS1				✓
	Economics A level	Edexcel 8EC0/9EC0	✓	✓		
	Law A level	AQA 7161/7162	✓	✓		



# Modern languages

## Course spotlight

### A level Spanish

Learning a language unlocks a wealth of opportunities. From working abroad, to conversing fluently with native Spaniards, studying **A level Spanish** online will develop students' language skills and deepen their cultural and international understanding.

With its strong, practical application, **A level Spanish** will equip students with invaluable skills to help future-proof their aspirations, and broaden their perspective on a wide range of issues and topics.



## Course spotlight

### A level French

As the second most widely-learned language after English, **A level French** is highly-sought after by employers all around the world.

Providing a very thorough knowledge of both the culture and society of France, and of other French-speaking countries, our **A level French** online course is a hugely-rewarding subject that they'll find relevant and stimulating.

Through topics such as 'culture et musique francophone', 'musique et cinéma' and 'literature and film' this course will provide an immersive French experience to help students master the skills to secure the result they need.





# A levels

All of NEC's A levels meet the latest A level specifications.

## How long will it take students to study for an A level with NEC?

- The specification for each course suggests how many hours students will need to complete the course. They will also need time to complete assignments and then prepare for exams. Everyone is different so it is impossible to say exactly how long an NEC course will take individual students.
- They will be able to work through the course at their own pace. There are no deadlines - other than for exams and non-examination assessments (NEA), so your students can work at a pace they are comfortable with and that fits around other commitments.
- When you enrol students with NEC they will get support from their personal tutor and Student Support for the duration of their course. If they are studying an A level this is up to two years.

## When can we enrol students?

You can enrol students at any time. But if they are hoping to take the exam at a specific sitting you will need to enrol them by a certain date to make sure they have sufficient time to complete their NEC assignments and submit them to their tutor for marking and guidance before they sit their exam. This is particularly important if the course includes a non-examination assessment (NEA).

## What textbooks are needed?

Our A levels include a free ebook for most essential textbooks. If the A level requires additional textbooks which are not included in the course fee, we will tell you. You can find the list of textbooks required for each course on our website [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk), or call our Course Advice Team for details on 0800 389 2839.

## Assessment

All A levels are assessed by exam. We assume that you will enter your students for the written exams at your school or college.

## Non-examination assessment (NEA)

- For some subjects, there will be an element of NEA. This could take the form of coursework, a spoken language endorsement, a practical endorsement for science subjects, or an oral exam for languages.
- As well as marking their NEC assignments, your students' personal tutor will mark and authenticate their coursework. Coursework authentication and marking is included in the course fee.
- NEC is an approved examination centre for NEA. This means that if you enrol students on a course with us that has NEA elements, they will have access to assessment for the NEA part of their course if you need this. We assume that you will enter your students for practical or oral assessments at your school or college.

## What can the school do to support students studying online?

- Students perform best if a teacher takes on the role of a mentor and sets a regular time aside to check on their progress and keep them motivated. The NEC tutor and the course will provide the academic support but we know from experience that involvement of the school is important to the success of the student, especially the teacher/mentor who provides an invaluable role and point of contact.

**Please check our website for full details of our A level and AS level courses.**



Distance learning helped me to improve skills like independent study.

**Karim, A level Maths**

## Our A level results

Our students consistently achieve results as good as or higher than the national outcome. Results change every year. Below are some examples from recent exam sessions. Please visit the website for the most up-to-date information.



Results are from students who have either taken their exams at one of NEC's partnership examination centres or have informed us of their results.

## Case study

### Flexible provision

A specialist music school aims to create a family environment in which pupils can develop their musical, intellectual, artistic and social skills. Alongside musical excellence, the school has an enviable record of academic achievement.

With so much of the timetable dedicated to music, how does the school offer the breadth of subject choice that fosters academic excellence? 'Of course we can't offer all the subjects pupils may be interested in studying - no school can - but the National Extension College has enabled us to expand what we offer to older pupils,' explains the school's Director of Studies, who came across NEC by chance a

few years ago when a small group of students expressed an interest in studying A level Philosophy.

*The school's open-minded approach to academic provision means it can be flexible in what it offers students, but it's difficult to justify the teaching time when just two or three pupils want to study a subject outside the main curriculum. NEC's approach, with 1:1 tuition for every student provided as part of the course, means we don't have to give a thought to timetabling, teaching time, marking pupils' work or preparing them for exams.*

*'Pupils choosing NEC courses have to be self-disciplined. Independent study fits very well with the school's ethos of individual endeavour for collaborative creation.'*





Self-study made me realise that learning never stops. It's not a race, not a sprint, not even a marathon, but a lifelong journey and you need to pace yourself.

**Natalia, GCSEs and IGCSEs including Combined Science**

## How long will it take to study for a GCSE level with NEC?

- The specification for each course suggests how many hours students will need to complete the course. They will also need time to complete assignments and then prepare for exams. Everyone is different so it is impossible to say exactly how long an NEC course will take individual students.
- Students will be able to work through the course at their own pace. There are no deadlines - other than for exams and non-examination assessments (NEA), so your students can work at a pace they are comfortable with and that fits around other commitments.
- When you enrol students with NEC they will get support from their personal tutor and Student Support for the duration of their course. If they are studying a GCSE or IGCSE this is up to 18 months. If you feel that your students are not going to be able to finish the course in that time, Student Support may be able to help by extending the course.

## When can we enrol students?

You can enrol students at any time. But if they are hoping to take the exam at a specific time you will need to enrol them by a certain date to make sure they have sufficient time to complete their NEC assignments and submit them to their tutor for marking and guidance before they sit their exam.

## Assessment

- GCSE and IGCSE courses are assessed by exams.
- None of the subjects offered by NEC at GCSE and IGCSE level require students to submit any coursework for assessment.
- The GCSE English Language course includes a spoken language endorsement. We assume that you will enter your students for the written exams and for the speech and language endorsement for GCSE English Language and the language oral exams at the school or college.

**Please check our website for full details of our GCSE and IGCSE courses.**

## Course spotlight

### GCSE Astronomy

From stars and constellations, the solar system and nebulae; to cosmology and space exploration; our interactive GCSE Astronomy online course will enable you to explore space through engaging resources, at your own pace.





My tutor was immensely supportive and my experience of being a student with NEC was all I hoped it would be.

Anna, GCSE Maths

## Our GCSE results

Our students consistently achieve results as good as or higher than the national outcome. Results change every year. Below are some examples from recent exam sessions. Please visit the website for the most up-to-date information.



Results are from students who have either taken their exams at one of NEC's partnership exam centres or have informed us of their results.

### Filling gaps in students' education

NEC has experience working with schools who have students with special needs and we are aware that the classroom environment doesn't work for everyone.

For example, we have worked with an SEN school whose students have Asperger's Syndrome. Some students had bad experiences with education in the past and/or had gaps in their attendance. Distance learning provided a solution as it allowed students to work at their own pace and can help prepare them for work and further study. It can also fill in the gaps created by extended periods away from formal education.

The school developed their own model of blended learning combining distance learning with additional tutor support. Timetables were personalised to each student's needs, to help them achieve qualifications, to try out a subject they may want to study further, or so that they could continue to study even if they needed time away from the classroom.

### Extending subject choice

One school that NEC has been working with for many years started by offering NEC courses to their sixth form students to give them greater subject choice and make individual timetables more flexible.

Using our distance learning courses, students were able to choose courses that could not be fitted into the school timetable - enabling them to study the subjects they needed to focus on for further education or their chosen career, as well as those subjects they felt passionate about.

Students in the sixth form were also able to choose specialist subjects offered by NEC but which were not part of the school's mainstream curriculum.

Specialist teachers at the school acted as mentors to the students by checking regularly on the progress they were making with their course, ensuring that they had their tutorials with their NEC tutors, and helping them with anything they were struggling with.

Following on from the success of the A level distance learning programme, they extended the offer to GCSE students with good results.



# How else can we help?

Whilst flexibility of a distance learning course is ideal for many students, we know that sometimes more structure is needed, particularly for younger learners. In addition to NEC's high-quality support and benefits, we can offer additional support to younger students, and guide them through their course in a personal and more structured manner.

In a face-to-face environment the teacher provides structure, support and motivation, and will identify and deal with issues as soon as they arise. Our support for younger students includes Progress Portal access for one teacher or mentor (see page 6). Further additional services can be added if needed such as extra tutorials or help with revision.

For more information about the additional support we can offer to younger students see our website [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk) or phone **0800 389 2839**. There is an additional cost for this service.

## Course spotlight

### Critical Thinking

This short self-study course is aimed at A level students and those preparing for university entrance exams. By developing critical thinking skills, you will be able to judge the value, truth and basis of claims made in any debate. You will also learn to make your own convincing arguments.

### Problem Solving

This short self-study course is aimed at A level students and those preparing for university entrance exams. It will help you to develop logical methods of handling numerical, graphical and pictorial data to solve problems. Such problem-solving skills are essential to lawyers, researchers, sociologists, geographers, historians and those in many other professions.



## Case study

### Maintaining subject choice

Faced with the difficulty of recruiting a specialist psychology teacher at short notice, a school initially turned to NEC to help them continue to offer A level Psychology to their students and has since enrolled students on other NEC courses. *'As well as lacking a psychology teacher we were also looking to resolve some tricky timetable clashes for individual students and increase our range of subject choices,'* the Headteacher explains, *'For other schools considering distance learning I'd say "Go for it!" we know it works.'*



I cannot stress too highly my admiration for this course.

Mia, Latin: A course for beginners



## We've got courses for staff too!

We can provide courses for staff as well as students! Details of all of our courses are available on our website [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk). They include:

- **Childcare and Playwork courses** - to qualify you to work in settings such as after-school or holiday clubs and are accredited by NCFE CACHE.
- **Counselling and mentoring courses** - to help develop the skills critical for anyone in a teaching or support role.
- **A level History of Art** - to explore a subject that is omitted from most school curricula.
- **Management** - to build on leadership and management skills to help you progress to more senior roles.
- **Problem Solving and Critical Thinking**
- **Latin: A course for beginners** - a thorough introduction to Latin. No prior knowledge needed.

And of course, you could choose to take one of the A level courses in this guide to refresh your knowledge of a subject or gain an A level in something new.

## Supporting students going to university

### Exclusive discounts for NEC students

The National Extension College (NEC) are working together with key education partners to make progression from FE (further education) to HE (higher education) a lot more affordable.

When you study with NEC you will be able to claim 10% off your first level at the Open College of the Arts.

NEC students can also get 10% off your first year at the Open University (OU).

### NEC's UCAS service

NEC offers additional services that support students with their UCAS applications, including personal statement reviews, predicted grades and references.

[Explore all of our additional services.](#)



Open  
College  
of the Arts



The Open  
University

UCAS

# Know your student

## Does this service work for them?

High quality courses and excellent tutor support is at the heart of what we offer. For committed students who have a mature approach to learning and are genuinely interested in their chosen subject, pursuing a course with NEC promotes their independent study skills, preparing them for further study or employment. Some students need more structure and mentoring to manage their studies and we have seen successful models where a school, college or a parent provides this additional support combined with the support NEC offers to younger students. This is aided by the use of the Progress Portal (see page 6).

There may be students that prefer to have set deadlines and a more structured timetable. Everyone learns differently and at NEC we understand that online learning does not suit every student. However, with additional support from their school or college, students may find that they can create a structure with our courses that suits their style of learning.

By working together we hope to develop a strong relationship with your school/college in order to give your students the best chance of success.

### Benefits of NEC's service for the school/college

Expand subject options

Offer non-mainstream subjects like philosophy and astronomy

Maintain modern foreign languages when they are threatened by budget cuts

Support a student who:

- needs to retake a subject
- is absent through illness
- is unwilling to attend
- wants to change subjects half way through the term

Promotes independent learning

Facilitates a step-change in delivery models

Reduces the need for supply teachers or bussing students to other schools or colleges for small classes or specialist subjects

School will be provided with one login for Progress Portal access to monitor student progress

### Benefits of NEC's service for students

Work wherever there is access to the internet

PDF and printable materials to support them offline

Support from other students through an online forum

Revisit and revise topics as needed

Improved engagement, promotes independent learning skills and time management

Access to subjects not available at school or college

Courses follow the student - so they can continue learning a subject after leaving school or college

Study for an additional qualification during a gap year

NEC is the trading name of The Open School Trust, an independent registered charity. It is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England.

Charity number: 328414

Company number: 02438525

# Why NEC?

For students who need a flexible route to those essential GCSE and A level qualification, the National Extension College is a hidden treasure and a superb option.

**Mary Curnock Cook, Former Chief Executive, UCAS**

NEC's approach [...] means we don't have to give a thought to timetabling, teaching time, marking pupils' work or preparing them for exams. Pupils choosing NEC courses have to be self-disciplined. Independent study fits very well with the school's ethos of individual endeavour for collaborative creation.

**Director of Studies at a specialist music school**

## Get in touch

[esther.chesterman@nec.ac.uk](mailto:esther.chesterman@nec.ac.uk)

